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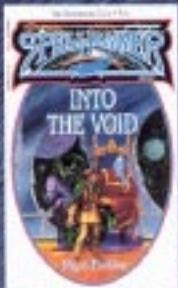
#174

# Dragon®<sup>®</sup>

MAGAZINE



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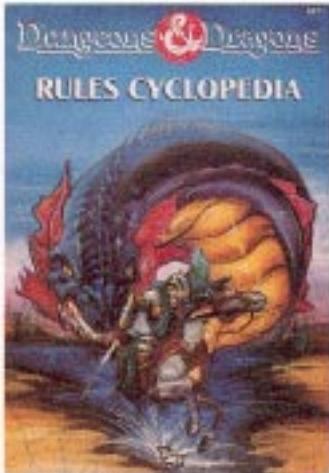
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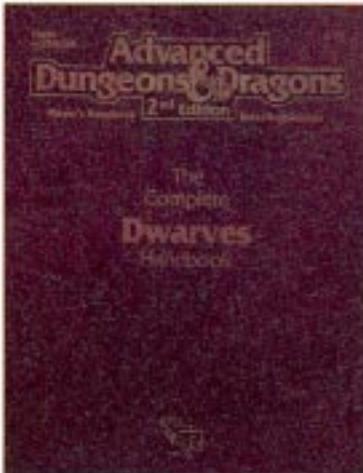


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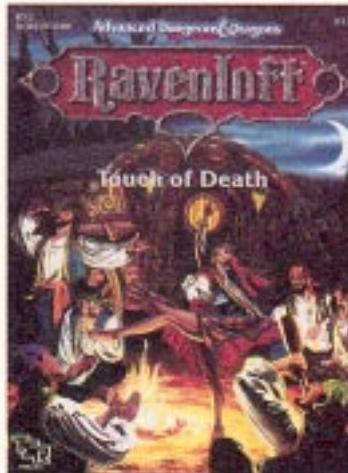


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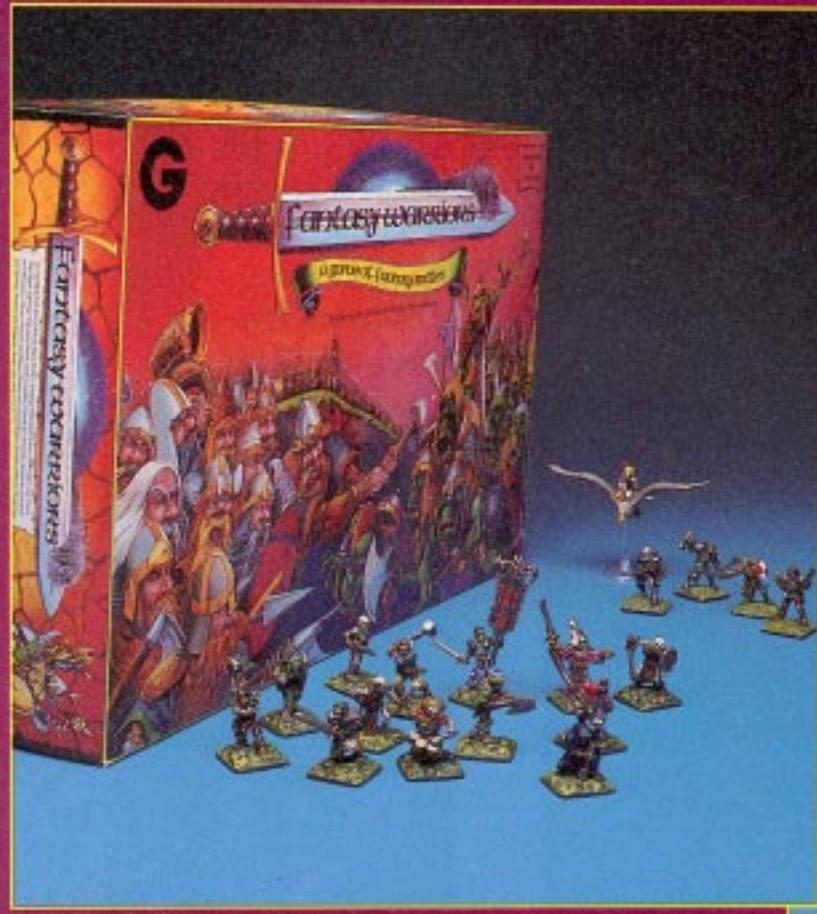
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# Dragon

MAGAZINE

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## COVER

Two unlucky adventurers have uncovered a grave matter in Kevin Ward's cover painting for this issue. Unfortunately, they haven't joined in with the proper spirit, and soon things will be coming to a dead stop.

# LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

## Just write to...

Dear Dragon,

How do I write to an author of DRAGON Magazine?

Your reader till a neogi marries a human,

Aaron McDonald  
No address given

If you want to contact an author or artist published in this magazine, just send your letter to that person, c/o DRAGON Magazine, and we will forward the letter if at all possible. In some cases we have no forwarding addresses for contributors who are not currently published, and our addresses for "Forum" and "Letters" writers are sometimes incomplete (ahem), but we make every effort to send your letters along.

## Shadow monster

Dear Dragon,

I have just received your issue #170, and it is great. I have just one question. In the article, "Crossing Dragons With Everything," it says that there is a "shadow" dragon, but I have never heard of one. Where might I find the statistics for it?

Jon Tacey  
Bremerton WA

The dreaded shadow dragon, originally described in the AD&D® 1st Edition Monster Manual II (pages 58-59), reappeared in the AD&D 2nd Edition Monstrous Compendium, GREYHAWK® Appendix (MC5).

## For the record

Dear Dragon,

Just for the record, Castle Amber, the D&D® module mentioned in the letters' column of issue #170, is actually module X2; module XI is *The Isle of Dread*.

Although few people at my school actually play role-playing games, your magazine is immensely popular. My copy alone always circles among many people. I, of course, always recommend they purchase their own copies. (By the way, Eric J., if you are reading this, I would like my issue #168 back, please.)

R. Derek Pattison  
Racine WI

## Merty's magic

Dear Dragon,

I have a question about one of Merty's magical items, found on page 15 of issue #168 ("Merty's Manual of Magical Merchandise"). On page 15, it says that *Merty's multiplanar mushrooms* cost 11,250 gp, but in the picture on the opposite page, it shows the mushrooms (center of the top shelf) costing only 1,250 gp. What is the real price?

Jeff Hagen  
No address given

The original text gave the value as 1,250 gp, but this was boosted by the editors to reflect the item's powers. Use the 11,250 gp value.

## Ecology index

Dear Dragon,

In the editorial of your anniversary issue, #170 (and, by the by, congrats on 15 first-rate years), Mr. Moore went over a list of article ideas that the readers and the editors would like to see more of. One of these suggestions was for more "The Ecology of..." articles. As soon as I read that, my mind started bubbling over with ideas, but I'm afraid I might accidentally rewrite a previously described monster. I'd hate to write up, say, an "Ecology of the Vampire" article, only to have it turned down solely because you had already printed one in an issue I missed.

So, for me and anyone else itching to tell DMs everywhere exactly why monsters are the way they are, how about a quick list of monsters covered to date in the "Ecology" series. Perhaps you could also suggest a few monsters that you would especially like to see written up, as well.

D. Mark Griffon  
Portage WI

Thank you for the praise. The following is a listing of all the monsters that have been covered in the "Ecology" series (and related articles) to date, with the DRAGON Magazine issue in which they appeared and whether the articles also gave brief details on other monsters:

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# EDITORIAL

## Valhalla Diary



**Wednesday:** It's August 7th, and I'm off with Dale Donovan to the 1991 GEN CON® game fair, at the MECCA center in Milwaukee. We set up our booth in a couple of hours, discover that we don't have enough magazines, and order more. We also have no cash register and have to hide our excess magazines under some nearby gaming tables. There are ominous signs that this convention is going to be another record breaker, such as the block-long line of gamers standing at preregistration a full 24 hours before the convention opens. We go back to TSR to help Larry Smith and Barbara Young on our deadline for DRAGON® issue #173, then I go to an aikido class in the evening and don't get home until midnight—a brilliant move that guarantees much fun in trying to stay awake the following morning.

**Thursday:** We get a cash register, the doors open, the cash register breaks, and we do a brisk, steady business at our booth frantically making change in our heads. The latest issues of our magazines and our all-new T-shirts (designed by Ray Van Tilburg) are hot items. One gamer tries to sell his AD&D® 1st Edition books to me, somehow laboring under the impression that because TSR is producing AD&D 2nd Edition material, TSR employees must think 1st Edition stuff is pretty valuable. Since my TSR office is literally jammed to the shelf tops with AD&D 1st and 2nd Edition game materials, I decline his offer.

Eventually, I take a break and go sightseeing around the packed exhibit hall. Huge miniatures scenery tables are in use by TSR, Inc. (SPELLJAMMER™ and DARK

SUN™ games), FASA Corporation (RENE-GADE LEGION\* and SHADOWRUN\* games), and Games Workshop (WARHAMMER 40,000\* game). Colorful spelljammer ship models in 25 mm scale, some almost 3' long, are used in play by TSR's DMs. The Chain Maille Fashions booth, for reasons obvious to anyone who saw its staff in chain-mail halter tops, is surrounded by young, big-eyed male gamers. Liz Williams, who is in charge of the massive art show, reminds me that there is an art show on and I should see it, but I am not able to this day. Steve ("Twilight Empire") Sullivan talks with gamers about his comic. And Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman show up and give away about 300,683 free autographed copies of their books while spreading horrible rumors about me.

In the evening, I attend a seminar hosted by Jeff Grubb and the SPELLJAMMER design staff, which discusses some dangerous ideas, such as halfling gangsters in wildspace and the existence of solid crystal spheres containing billion-mile-long dungeons that must be navigated by spelljammer ships. ("Okay, you go through the portal and see a cubic room, one hundred miles along each side, containing a small star, a solid-gold asteroid, and forty hammerships full of orcs. Roll for initiative.") The meeting eventually degenerates into philosophical arguments, such as whether each crystal sphere is its own Prime Material plane or each Prime Material plane has its own set of crystal spheres, and can clerics can use firearms depending on whether they use dum-dum or armor-piercing ammunition. (The audience is forced to vote on the above.) I flee with only shreds of my sanity left. I make plans to go out for dinner but instead fall asleep, exhausted and full of M&Ms.

**Friday:** Your bleary-eyed magazine staff meets for the excellent RPGA™ Network breakfast buffet, and we gain 10 pounds each. Australian gamers describe gaming life Down Under, and DRAGON Magazine wins the 1991 Gamers' Choice Award for

Best Professional Gaming Magazine (thanks for embarrassing me, guys). We stagger back to our booth and again do a brisk, steady business while frantically making change in our heads.

Today I notice even more young male gamers around the Chain Maille Fashions booth, and I also notice the many booths selling nongaming materials such as T-shirts, jewelry, gems and crystals, cups and mugs, cassettes and CDs, books on every historical and SF/fantasy topic imaginable, and paintings (the latter booths are manned by the likes of Larry Elmore, Keith Parkinson, and Robin Wood). The TSR artists have their own booth and have good sales with their "Death Angels" art collection which attracts many of the same gamers who hang out at the Chain Maille Fashions booth. I see Liz Williams and am again reminded of the art show, but I don't get a chance to see it. And Margaret and Tracy give away about 40,583,038 free autographed copies of their books while spreading horrible rumors about me.

When the exhibition hall closes down, I visit the computer gaming area and marvel at the MidiMaze competitions, in which smiley faces shoot bullets at other smiley faces in a dungeon setting. Up to twenty players take part in each game, each player gifting his smiley-face warrior with an appropriate name ("Hellfang says, 'Have a nice day!'").

Then I visit the miniatures gaming area and am stunned at the sheer size of some of the games being played. A STAR FLEET BATTLES\* game covers four 4' X 8' tables; a full-scale recreation of the air attack on Pearl Harbor covers five; a vast BATTLE-TECH\* scenario covers six. And then there's the *Lord of the Rings* Siege of Gondor scenario, which covers more tables than I can count and is designed to handle up to 200 gamers, all taking part in the assault on a gigantic 25 mm-scale model of Minas Tirith. Siege towers, orc and goblin hordes, the Riders of Rohan, the war machine Grond, the fleet of Dol Amroth, the River Anduin, wall archers, oliphants—you name it, it is there, thanks to the combined efforts of many companies, gamers, and painters. I am beyond awe.

I am supposed to attend a TSR party in the evening, but instead find myself with a group of artists at the Safe House, a Milwaukee restaurant/bar/dance spot with an espionage theme. I prove to everyone that I don't know how to dance, but otherwise enjoy the company and my cherry-flavored "nab" (nonalcoholic beverage). I get back to my hotel room after midnight, another brilliant move that produces the same results as before.

**Saturday:** Saturdays are usually when the greatest number of visitors come to the GEN CON game fair, but today the tsunami of gamers that pours into the exhibition hall shocks everyone. The weather is beautiful outside, and the

gamers have all brought their girlfriends, boyfriends, spouses, parents, children, third cousins, lawyers, and neighbors with them. I remember running back and forth a lot to the nearly useless cash register, but not much else. I can no longer see the Chain Maille Fashions booth through the mob around it, but I am smart enough to visit it before the hall opens. I am amazed at all the work that goes into making a single chain-mail headpiece, much less something complicated like a halter top, and I feel relieved that I picked a simple career like editing.

And my six-year-old son John shows up, all excited to help his daddy behind the sales counter but needing a drink first. And something to play with. And five questions answered. And another drink. And someone to clean up the drink he spills all over the chair. And five more questions answered. And an AMAZING® Stories cap and a set of plastic vampire teeth from the White Wolf booth. And another drink.

Today I meet some Desert Storm veterans and the lady who painted Barry Manilow's jet, I listen to the noise from the jousts at Chaosium's booth, and I notice a booth selling games that glow in ultraviolet light. I don't have time to check out the art show, though I do walk past it once. I also see the booth selling the \$3,000 wooden dirigible and the \$6,000 carved stump/castle. Melissa Collins and William S. Taylor of Chicago, Ill., win my personal vote for having the most elegant costumes at the convention; beautiful work!

Jeff Grubb comes by the booth to get me for my seminar on superhero games, and I barely escape in time to moderate it (actually, I am 10 minutes late). We have a great time despite the news that no one is likely to develop a licensed role-playing game based on Omaha the Cat Dancer or Cherry Poptart.

And Margaret and Tracy pass out 790,529,485,536,868 free copies of their books and spread horrible rumors about me. But by now I am hiring mercenaries to ask them embarrassing questions and make rude comments in loud voices near their booth.

I fall asleep about 8:15 PM., too tired to think or move and too full of M&Ms to consider dinner.

**Sunday:** Today things go back to normal, and we do a brisk, steady business at our booth frantically making change in our heads. Margaret and Tracy distribute free autographed copies of their books to the entire population of the Milky Way Galaxy. I finally walk through the art show, and it's the best, especially the vampire stuff; way cool, as my son John says. But I never do get to see Jim Lowder's "bad movie classics" room or sit in on any of the 987 trillion role-playing games that were played (I almost forgot about them).

At the booth, we run out of T-shirts. We run out of mugs. We run out of steam. We run out of time. At 4 PM., we tear down the

booth in 20 minutes flat and go home to collapse. (Some of us go out for Mexican food.) Everything from about 6 P.M. to the following morning counts as our weekend off.

**Monday:** Those of us who survived the convention show up for work. The lucky ones who put in for vacation get to sleep at home. Scum.

The game fair ran us ragged, but it was worth every second of it. My thanks to everyone who helped make this the best and biggest role-playing convention ever.

That is, until we hold the 1992 GEN CON 25th-anniversary game fair, which will be combined with the annual ORIGINSTM game fair to dwarf all game conventions held on the planet Earth since the dawn of time.

Start planning now. And bring your own M&Ms.



**P.S. Collectors' notes:** It is becoming apparent that certain issues of DRAGON Magazine and DUNGEON® Adventures are much in demand but are becoming very difficult to obtain. If you are a collector, be aware of the rarity of the following issues in particular:

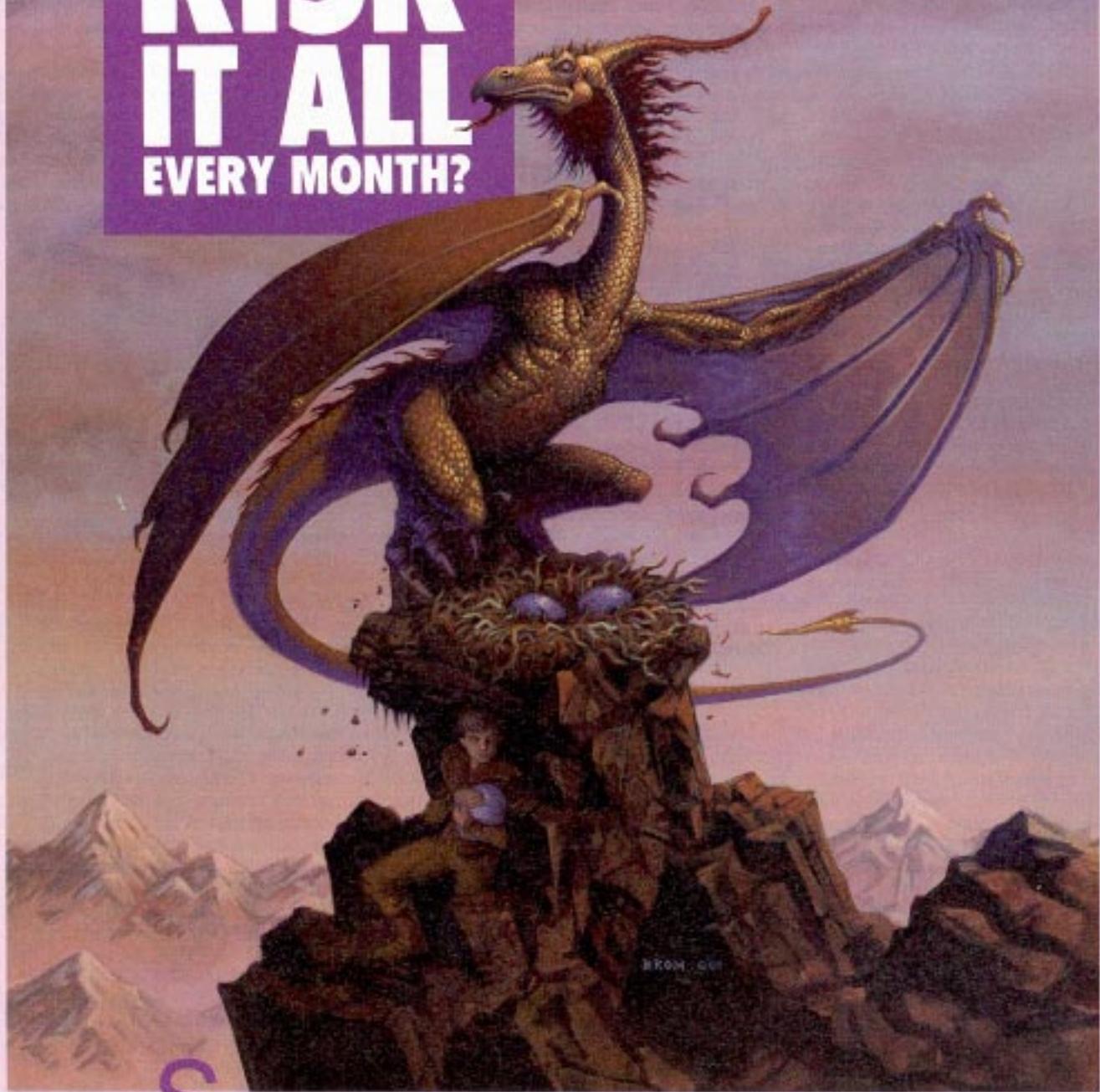
DRAGON issue #148 (August 1989)—This was the issue with the cut-out deck of many things for the AD&D game (artwork by George Barr), which has apparently put it in hot demand. The TSR Mail Order Hobby Shop is currently sold out of this issue. We can't reproduce the cards as nicely as before because the original artwork was sold to various buyers, and all transparencies of the art have been destroyed. We could find none of this issue to sell at our GEN CON game fair booth this year. I've not yet heard any prices on these issues. Note that these cards were reproduced in black-and-white in DUNGEON issue #19, for use with the module "House of Cards."

DUNGEON issues #2-6 (Nov./Dec. 1986 through July/Aug. 1987)—DUNGEON issue #1 (Sept./Oct. 1986) was overprinted, but a few remain in stock (it sells for \$10 through the TSR Mail Order Hobby Shop). Issues #2-6 were not overprinted, and they no longer exist in TSR's inventory, becoming surprisingly rare. We can barely find them in our own offices. I have no word on their sale values to collectors.

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**Dragon**  
MAGAZINE

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Artwork by Pete Longmeier

Things That Go Bump In The Night



# Are You Having Bad Thoughts?

by Bruce Nesmith

Even the powers of the mind are warped by the evil mists of Ravenloft

I am lost on a straight path within my own mind. When I came to this place of smooth evil, I understood the powers of the mind better than most men. Black skies and white water ran across the beast's back. I could use its hidden abilities to touch other red minds and change the way they twisted. Once I touched a faraway mind, filled with a sour, alien evil....

Rantings from *The Dream Trances of Vlanic Kroskos*

The swirling mists of the AD&D® RAVENLOFT™ campaign do not play by the same rules as other realms. Their dark secrets force all who enter to follow the new order or fall prey to the evils of that place. This is as true of the psionicist as it is of the wizard or priest. The powers that psionics users are so comfortable with work differently in the demiplane of dread.

Undead play a dark and significant role in Ravenloft. The demiplane's connections to the Negative Material plane are stronger than those connecting the Prime Material and Negative Material planes. Each intelligent undead horror from this place can put up a shield of false thoughts, indistinguishable from the real thing even when using telepathy. This is a conscious function, not an automatic one; the undead creature must consciously decide to project these thoughts. It does not hinder the foul creature in any way to do so, so it can attack or cast spells and project false thoughts at the same time.

Undead, as a class, are immune to any mental-control power or mind-altering ability while in Ravenloft. This includes many of the powers in the telepathic discipline. Unfortunately, it does not mean that the walking dead cannot themselves be psionic or have telepathic powers. A psionic vampire able to use the telepathic discipline is a horrifying opponent, indeed.

There are four cardinal rules used when deciding how a power, spell, or magical item works in Ravenloft. These are used in a loose fashion and are subject to interpretation by the game master. They are:

- Anything summoned or otherwise transported from another plane into Ravenloft cannot go back automatically. Most outer planar creatures are aware of their new "prisoner" status immediately upon entering Ravenloft. They are quite likely to then turn their dread powers upon the unfortunate soul that summoned them to this place.
- Divination spells are weaker here, favoring the secret ways of dark evil. Good and evil cannot be detected by spells or other powers, although law and chaos can be detected. There is no sure-fire way to determine if a person is good or evil other than judging him for yourself.
- Powers, spells, or magical items that are wholly evil or can be used only for evil purposes require a Ravenloft Powers check each time they are used. This applies to most necromantic functions and life-energy draining powers.
- Those spells, powers, and items dealing with the living dead or similar necromantic spells may actually work better in Ravenloft. This applies to things that create or assist undead, not those that hinder or suppress them.

Below is a list of all the psionic powers that are altered by the dark powers of Ravenloft. If a power is not described



below, then it works normally in this dark place. Psionic powers sometimes have special effects when a 20 is rolled or the power score is rolled. Any changes to these conditions are noted as well. As is true of most of Ravenloft's insidious changes, the characters are unaware of their new limitations until the results of using them make those limits painfully obvious.

### **Clairsentient disciplines**

The dark, swirling mists of Ravenloft obscure all creatures' abilities to see the truth. For spell-casters, their divination spells are weaker, less able to tell good from evil. Nothing is quite as frightening as the unknown. In Ravenloft, evil is always assumed but never surely known until it may be too late.

**Aura sight:** This power can never reveal the good or evil portion of a character's alignment. The true evil of a creature or character is hidden in the demiplane of dread. Using this power reveals only the lawful or chaotic part of his alignment.

**Clairaudience:** A white, transparent ear appears wherever the psionicist is trying to listen. This ghostly ear is visible to anyone at that location, assuming that they look in its direction. An unsuspecting character might mistake it for a supernatural visitation, in which case a horror check is required. This power cannot be used to listen across a domain border. If the power score is rolled, then the entire head of the psionicist floats like a disembodied apparition at the listening spot—definitely a cause for a horror check. Its features are distinct enough that the character can be identified at a later time.

**Clairvoyance:** Similar to clairaudience, this power places an eye, ghostly but visible, at the spot where the power is being projected. If it is mistaken for a ghost or other spirit, a horror check might be required. The presence of the eye makes the psionicist vulnerable to gaze attacks. For example, a vampire might be

able to charm the psionicist by meeting the gaze of his clairvoyant eye. If the power score is rolled, then the character's entire head appears at the viewing point. Its features are clear enough that the character can be identified later.

**Danger sense:** This power actually works too well in Ravenloft. The dark powers gleefully allow the character to sense all of the horrifying danger around him. The tingling that warns of danger happens when any evil creature is even thinking about the character, even if the creature doesn't pose an immediate threat. It goes off anytime the character is subject to a Ravenloft Powers check. It goes off anytime the character crosses a domain border or enters the mists of Ravenloft. In other words, it goes off almost all the time.

**Object reading:** The good or evil part of the owner's alignment cannot be read with this power. When revealing the previous owner's race, remember that "undead" is not a race, but merely a condition of the creature. The *Tome of Strahd* would reveal that its owner is human. The fact that he is also this land's most deadly vampire is not revealed. Similarly, a shroud once carried by a groaning spirit (banshee) would give off emanations only of being owned by an elf.

**Precognition:** Ravenloft clings to its secrets, sharing them with only the chosen few. No one can pierce the veil of the future here, with the notable exception of the vistani. In the case of this psionic power, the most powerful vistani fortune teller in the same domain is instantly alerted that someone not of his people is attempting to view the future. She can force a false vision upon the character if he fails his power check. The vistani fortune tellers do not always exercise this option. If the fortune teller does use this option, the psionicist cannot distinguish the false vision from a true one.

**Spirit sense:** Spirits have a much stronger aura in Ravenloft, allowing them to be sensed much farther away. The presence of spirits anywhere within 60 yards alerts the character. However, unless he is able to experiment with this power, the user is unaware of the expanded range. If the power score is rolled, he learns how far away the spirit is, but not its direction. If the lord of the domain is a spirit, then the character constantly senses a "nearby" spirit. This reflects the pervasive influence of the lord on his domain.

### **Psychokinetic disciplines**

Most of these powers are unaffected by Ravenloft. Manipulating objects with the mind is not directly relevant to good or evil.

**Animate shadow:** Beware of giving life to anything made of darkness when you are in Ravenloft. On a roll of 20, the animated shadow is imparted with a little of the substance of the demiplane of dread. It becomes the monster of the same name and seeks to kill the character. It will follow him everywhere, lurking just out of

sight, waiting for a chance to pounce upon its former master. As long as the shadow lives, the character casts no shadow himself. Any normal person that notices this will undoubtedly assume the worst about the character.

**Control body:** Taking over another creature's body is not in itself evil, but the potential to abuse the power is great. If the psionicist uses the controlled body for evil or unnecessarily selfish purposes, a Ravenloft Powers check must be made. Controlling another creature's body to stop it from attacking the power user or to save the creature from imminent danger is not considered selfish. Using the power to put a quick and painless end to an evil creature is also safe. However, making the victim dance on hot coals just for the fun of it is quite evil. The DM must make a judgment as to how the psionicist is using the controlled creature.

### Psychometabolic disciplines

Some of the darkest psionic powers lurk here. To use them in Ravenloft is to risk a horrible fate. The dark powers of Ravenloft always watch closely when these abilities are used.

**Aging:** Using this power is evil akin to life draining. Anyone killed by this power becomes a ghost and seeks revenge upon his murderer. Using this power requires a Ravenloft Powers check.

**Death field:** Sucking the life from a humanoid creature, like marrow from the bone, may allow it to return from the grave to haunt the character. The type of undead created is usually whatever undead creature most closely matches the hit dice or level of the creature killed. Regardless of the creature's original hit dice, there is a 20% chance that the dead being will walk again as a revenant. The death field is a direct channel to the Negative Material plane. Any undead creature inside such a field actually recovers as many lost hit points as it was supposed to lose. Using this power requires a Ravenloft Powers check for the user.

**Life draining:** This power allows the character to imitate the draining powers inherent in the most powerful forms of undead. How can this power be anything but evil? Like the death field power, creatures killed by life draining can become undead and seek revenge. Touching an undead reverses the flow of this power, causing an automatic backfire as defined by the power. Half of the psionicist's remaining hit points are absorbed by the creature. Using this power requires a Ravenloft Powers check.

**Shadow form:** If the character rolls a 20, the dark side of his nature is freed and he becomes a shadow, as per the monster, under the control of the DM for 1-4 turns. The shadow embarks upon a killing spree and does not expend further PSP if this happens. Using this power requires a Ravenloft Powers check.

### Psychoprotective disciplines

None of these powers can transport any creature or object across the border of a domain. Ravenloft jealously guards the power to leave a domain. As an obvious corollary, a user cannot expel any creature or object from the demiplane of Ravenloft, either.

**Astral projection:** This power does not work, either. Ravenloft does not allow any of its captive playthings to leave so easily.

**Banishment:** The affected creature is banished into a pocket dimension of Shadow within the planar boundaries of Ravenloft. It is an area of oppressive darkness that cannot be lit, even by magic. No form of infravision can penetrate its inky blackness. Since the pocket dimension is inside Ravenloft, all the twisted rules of the demiplane still apply.

**Dimension walk:** This power works as stated, with one minor exception. The dimension that is crossed is the pocket dimension of Shadow mentioned in the *banishment* power above. The character can be attacked by other creatures that have been banished (as per the psionic power), but this is unlikely since they remain there for so short a time.

**Probability travel:** This power just plain doesn't work. The psionicist still loses his 20 PSP to find that out.

### Telepathic disciplines

Remember that, in Ravenloft, all self-willed undead monsters have the insidious ability to imitate thought processes. They can present a false front of thoughts completely independent from what they might really be thinking. In this way, evil hides its true nature until it can spring upon the hapless adventurer. Unless stated otherwise, all undead are immune to any telepathic sciences and devotions.

**Domination:** Similar to the *control body* power listed previously, this power treads a thin line between good and evil. The temptation to be cruel or for the dominated creature to perform evil acts is all but overwhelming. If the psionicist uses this power for unnecessarily selfish, whimsical, or evil purposes, he must make a Ravenloft Powers check.

**ESP:** If used against self-willed undead able to put out false surface thoughts, this power will pick up only those false thoughts.

**Life detection:** This power detects all animated creatures, not just those that are alive. The living dead that are wholly dormant are not detected. For example, an inactive zombie or a vampire sleeping in its coffin are not detected by this power. As another example, a stone golem would be detected even if it was not moving.

**Mass domination:** The same results apply as for the domination power, above.

**Mindwipe:** This power can be used to remove the memory of a source of fear or horror, thereby canceling the effects of a failed fear or horror check. Since the

memories are only sealed away, not destroyed, they can come back at a later time if freed by the psychic surgery power. This power does not prevent the loss of intelligence or wisdom that normally results from using this power.

**Probe:** This power can pierce the layer of false thoughts produced by some undead. All undead get a bonus equal to half their hit dice, rounded down, when defending against the probe; for example, a vampire (8 + 3 HD) gets a + 4 bonus when defending against the probe. If it is successful, the undead monster's thoughts are not known, but the monster's horrifying nature is intimately revealed to the psionicist. This is cause for an immediate horror check on the psionicist's part. If the probe fails, the undead creature can place any thoughts it wishes into the probe.

**Truthear:** Ravenloft protects its most cherished creatures with a veil of secrecy. Undead monsters always appear to be telling the truth, even when it is obvious that they are lying.

### Metapsionic disciplines

Most of the powers in this discipline are not affected when in Ravenloft.

**Psychic drain:** There is little difference between draining a character's life energy, as vampires do, and draining his psychic energy to the point of permanent harm. If the psionicist intentionally uses this power to drain psychic energy to cause such damage, a Ravenloft Powers check must be made. Such treacherous evil is sometimes rewarded by the dark powers.

**Wrench:** This power can be used only to pull a creature into this plane, but not to force it out of Ravenloft. The undead lose any abilities to drain life levels if they are wrenched completely into Ravenloft. The magical pluses required to hit the creature are lessened by one. A creature that can only be hit by + 1 magical weapon or better can now be hit by normal weapons.

### Conclusion

As the budding psionicist enters Ravenloft, he should be very afraid. His newfound powers are not always what they seem to be. The demiplane of dread twists and perverts everything that touches it. The dark corners of the mind are filled with danger.

The psionicist is not the only creature in this foul place that can see into the minds of others. Deep under the mountains of Bluetspur, the illithids' power coils and grows. They have been brewing black treachery for decades in secret. Vlanic Kroskos touched one once with his mind. Perhaps someday the illithids will reach out and touch one of your characters. ☐



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# SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (SASEs are being returned with writers' guidelines for the magazine).

This month, the sage takes a short look at some enchanted items from the AD&D® 2nd Edition game.

**Can a wand of negation be used to dispel spells with a duration, such as fly or continual light, or does it work only on effects generated from wands, staves, and rods?**

A wand of negation prevents devices from generating magical effects. A wand of negation does not affect creatures or existing magical effects, though many readers have gotten confused while reading the wands description (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 157) and concluded otherwise. (The third sentence seems to be the major stumbling block, as it easily can be misread to indicate that the wand can negate spells from any source.) Note that the wand of negation need not be pointed directly at the item to be negated; it suffices to point the wand at the individual employing the item. The DM must decide what constitutes a "spell-like effect"; magical bonuses cannot be negated, nor can most other functions that

affect only the item's user, such as necklaces of adaptation or brooms of flying. Devices that create offensive magical effects such as fireballs, lightning bolts, shooting stars, polymorph other, and so on can be negated. Devices that have charges lose the appropriate number of charges if one of their effects is negated.

**Can a portable hole be draped across a character's back to prevent him from being back-stabbed?**

While a portable hole can be spread out over any surface to form its extra-dimensional space, a creature is not a surface. Creatures cannot make themselves insubstantial—and therefore immune to attack—by wrapping themselves in portable holes.

**What happens to items or creatures inside a portable hole or bag of holding when a reverse time spell (from *Tome of Magic*, page 103) is cast?**

This is up to the DM, but I strongly suggest that if the hole or bag is closed, the contents should be unaffected by most spells, as their areas of effect cannot extend into extradimensional spaces any more than they can cross planar boundaries. If the items are open (or are opened inside the area of effect), all their contents are affected normally. In this case, opening the item creates a portal through which objects, creatures, and magical effects can pass.

**Can a carpet of flying be used underwater?**

I can't think of any overwhelming reason why magical flight of any kind won't work under water, especially spells such

as levitate and fly. Some DMs, however, might rule that items such as brooms of flying and carpets of flying are too bulky or too dependent on an extraplanar connection to the plane of elemental Air to work while submerged. Alternately, the DM might rule that submarine movement is possible at one-half or one-third the aerial rate, due to increased resistance or other factors.

**Can gauntlets of dexterity raise a character's dexterity score above 18?**

There's nothing in the rules that says scores over 18 are impossible. Some DMs, however, might want to set some maximum value for a dexterity score augmented by these gauntlets or similar items. In such cases, the upper limit (for the total score) probably should be set somewhere in the 18-20 range.

**My group has been toying around with the rule on page 73 of the *Player's Handbook* that says size-S creatures can use only size-S weapons with one hand. If we create smaller versions of size-M weapons, such as a hand axe made for a dwarf, what would its statistics be? Also, what is the proper size class for a short sword? The weapons table says it's size M, but page 96 ("Attacking with Two Weapons") seems to indicate that it's size S.**

First, I suggest that you treat player-character dwarves as size-M creatures. About half of them should be more than 4' tall and qualify as size-M creatures without the benefit of a house rule anyway.

As this column has pointed out before, short swords are size-S weapons; the M listing in the weapons table (*Player's Handbook*, pages 68-69) is in error.

There really isn't any clean, neat method for generating statistics for scaled-down weapons, but a good rule of thumb might be to subtract one point of speed factor, two or three pounds of weight, and one "step" of damage die per size category reduced; thus, a weapon that does 1d6 hp damage would do 1d4 hp after downsizing. Obviously, you'll get some pretty strange results if you try to use this suggestion without making some common-sense adjustments on a case-by-case basis. Note that size-S creatures can use size M weapons with two hands. Ω

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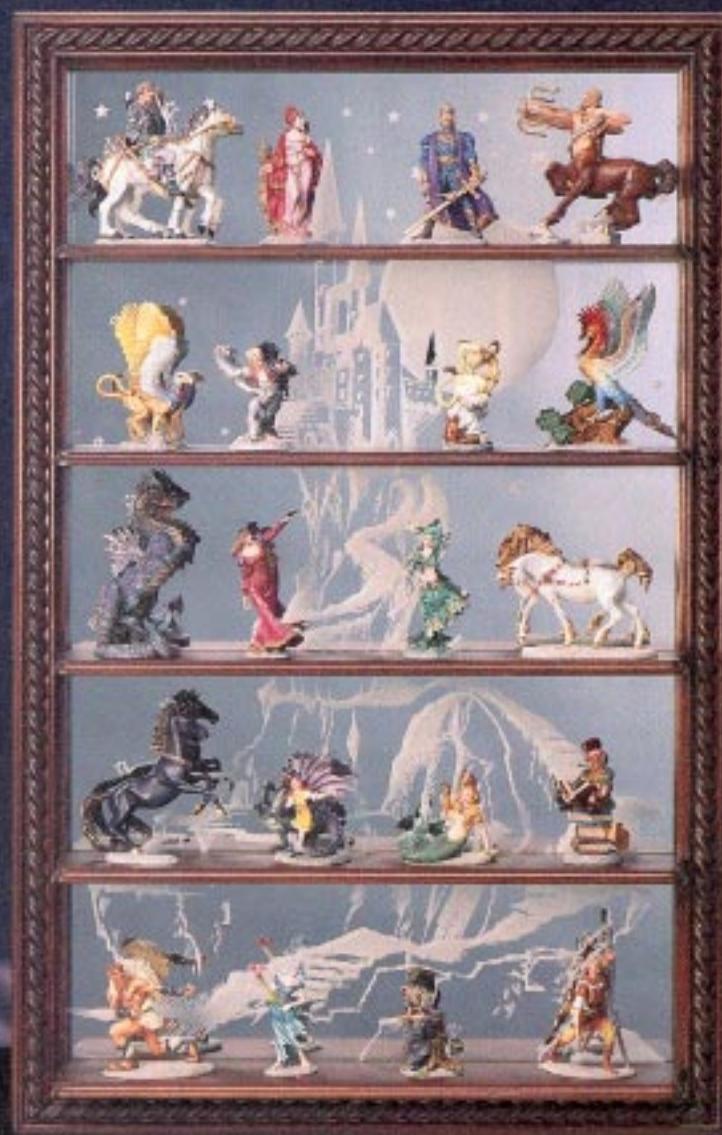
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# OUT OF THE MISTS

Three new RAVENLOFT™ creatures that long to meet you

by William W. Connors

Ravenloft. For many people, just the name of our land brings nightmares and dread. I have met heroes from other lands—knights from the world of Krynn, wizards from the cloistered enclaves of Toril, barbarians from the windswept plains of Athas—who shrink before the horrors that surround us.

Ours is a world carved from darkness and the supernatural, unlike any other I have heard of. With each passing day, the evil that holds sway in Ravenloft seems to become more powerful than before. This would be enough to daunt even the mightiest paladin, but I dare not give in to it. My work—my obsession—is too important. When my son, my sweet Erasmus, was taken from me, I saw what must be done.

In an effort to further the oppressed cause of good in our dark land, I have set about a project of great scope. Each and every encounter I have with the sinister lords of Ravenloft and their minions is to be detailed. In an effort to aid others who would pick up the same gauntlet that was thrown before me, I present what information I have been able to acquire about three creatures of Ravenloft: the mysterious fenhound, the dreaded shadow asps of Har'Akir, and the awesome and deadly psionic lich.

Study this manuscript well, my friends, for the knowledge it contains may save you from a horrible death—or worse.

Dr. Rudolph Van Richten  
13 October 735



# Shadow Asp

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Many Har'akir ruins and tombs
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Special
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET!	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	A
ALIGNMENT.	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	5-30 (5d6)
ARMOR CLASS:	2
MOVEMENT!	9
HIT DICE:	1/2
THAC0:	20
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1d2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	Shadow poison, surprise
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Piercing attacks do half damage
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	T (9"-12" long)
SIZE:	Fearless (20)
MORALE:	65
XP VALUE:	65

In all of Ravenloft, no place reveres the tombs of its dead more highly than Har'akir. Over the centuries, crypt builders there have sought to protect the precious bodies of their ancestors with traps, undead guardians, and cleverly hidden and concealed compartments. Recently, the priests of this desert realm have found an even more deadly warden for the tombs of their pharaohs: shadow asps.

Shadow asps appear to be slender snakes composed of pure darkness. They seem to have no physical form, but look as if they are nothing more than an extension of the shadows that give them their name. Although these creatures are barely intelligent, they instinctively lash out at those who intrude upon the tombs they live in.

**Combat:** Shadow asps are very hard to spot as they slide silently through the darkness of a tomb or temple. They make no sound, are utterly black, and thus often surprise their victims when they strike. To reflect this, shadow asps impose a -5 penalty on their victims' surprise rolls. It is important to note that shadow asps do not radiate body heat and are thus well hidden from all infravision.

In combat, a shadow asp strikes with its needlelike fangs, just as normal asps do. Although the bite inflicts only minor injuries (1-2 points of damage), it injects an insidious toxin. Those who are bitten must save vs. poison. Failure to save indicates that the victim has been injected with the essence of darkness and gradually begins to become a shadow. This transformation takes five rounds, during which time the character gradually grows darker and darker. At the end of the fifth round, the character must make a system-shock roll. Failure indicates that the victim (in the process of becoming the shadow) breaks up and is lost, with no chance of resurrection; success means that the victim has become a shadow. Shadows created by this process are bound to the area guarded by the shadow asps and join them as wardens of that place. At any time during the transformation, but not afterwards, a remove curse or dispel magic spell can be cast on the victim to halt the change.

Those who strike at a shadow asp with weapons will find it difficult to harm. Although it can be harmed by any normal weapons, the snake's agility makes it very hard to hit (hence its low armor class); a hold monster spell used to immobilize one would make it AC 8. Although bludgeoning and slashing weapons inflict full damage to shadow asps, piercing attacks (such as from arrows, spears, pikes, etc.) do only half damage. Any single



shadow asp can be instantly slain by the casting of a *light* or *continual light* spell that has been directly targeted on the creature (no saving throw is allowed them). Illuminating spells used to destroy shadow asps provide no additional light for vision, being cancelled out at once. Shadow asps are not undead and cannot be turned by priests or harmed by holy symbols or water. They are summoned creatures and can be held back by spells like *protection from evil*.

**Habitat/Society:** Shadow asps are magical creatures summoned from the plane of Shadow by the priests of certain gods worshiped in Har'akir (Osiris, Set, or Nephthys). The ceremony by which these creatures are called into existence is a tightly guarded secret. Shadow asps are very territorial when summoned into the Prime Material plane. They slither about the area surrounding the place where they were summoned and maintain a constant vigil against the intrusions of potential grave robbers or defilers. It is not uncommon for priests to place them in confined areas as traps. Thus, a hidden catch might cause the hollow base of a statue to fall open, releasing dozens of trapped shadow asps, or a trap door might drop trespassers into a pit with a number of these serpents slithering at its bottom.

Because they turn their victims into shadows, there is a 40% chance of finding 1d6 shadows (q.v.) with any group of shadow asps.

**Ecology:** Shadow asps are not a part of the physical world. Because of their extradimensional origins, they play no part in the grand scheme of nature.

# Fenhound

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any Ravenloft wetlands
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night of a full moon
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT!	Chaotic good
NO. APPEARING:	2-8 (2d4)
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	5
THAC0:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Baying
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+2 or better weapon to hit, special spell immunity
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	65%
SIZE:	L (8' long)
MORALE:	Fearless (20)
XP VALUE:	2,000

Misty moors and steaming peat bogs have always been places that men feared to tread at night. Obviously, such places can be treacherous and deadly. But in quiet whispers, some who live near these macabre wetlands also tell tales of the dreaded fenhounds.

A fenhound appears only in the grim, veiled light of a full moon. It looks much like a large mastiff, being muscular of build and covered in short, coarse brown fur. Although a fenhound's physical form is not unusual, the aura that surrounds it is. Because fenhounds are able to tap into the ambient supernatural power that accompanies the full moon, each is suffused with an eerie, pale yellow light.

Like most breeds of canine, fenhounds cannot speak. Because of their nature as pack hunters, they are able to communicate basic concepts between themselves with barks, yips, and growls.

**Combat:** Fenhounds are able to sense and flawlessly track those who have been forced to make a Ravenloft Powers check while on the moors near the fenhounds' home. The first sign that victims have of the fenhounds' approach is the sound of their baying. Although this howl has a chilling effect on all who hear it, most people suffer no ill effects from it. However, the person being tracked by the hounds must make a fear check the first time he hears their baying.

When fenhounds reach their victim, they charge directly into melee combat. Each round they are able to attack with their powerful jaws for 1-10 points of damage. Although they will do all that they can to reach the object of their hunt, those who try to block their way to protect their chosen victim are quickly attacked as well.

The aura of moonlight that surrounds a fenhound gives it special protection against attacks. This is reflected both in the creature's innate magic resistance and the fact that it cannot be harmed by weapons of less than +2 magical enchantment. Further, no spell from the priestly sun sphere can harm or hinder fenhounds. Spells employed by any priest who worships a god of the moon, moors, revenge, or a similar aspect will also not harm the fenhound.

If slain in combat, the body of the fenhound breaks up into a cloud of shimmering vapor that quickly fades away. The person delivering the death blow to the creature becomes marked, however, and will find himself hunted by a pack of fenhounds each time there is a full moon. Only an atonement or similar spell can



lift this curse from the character. If a character slays all of the hounds stalking him, he is free from their curse until the next full moon, when another pack of hounds will be released from the moors to hunt him anew.

**Habitat/Society:** Fenhounds are not creatures of the Prime Material plane. Rather, they seem to be some manifestation of the mists of Ravenloft itself. Their curious role as avenging spirits in this land of evil has puzzled many sages and experts on the occult. It may well be that there is some darker purpose to their existence that none have yet guessed.

Fenhounds are not creatures of evil disposition, despite their frightening countenance. Rather, they act against those who have done evil on the moors, swamps, and bogs of Ravenloft. Any person who is forced to make a Ravenloft Powers check (success or failure notwithstanding) while in a region inhabited by fenhounds will instantly draw their attention. When the next full moon occurs, two or more hounds will appear from the swirling mists on the wetlands to hunt down and destroy the fiends who have earned their wrath. Once the creatures arrive on the Prime Material plane, they will remain until dawn or until they or their victims have been slain.

**Ecology:** Fenhounds seem to serve a role as guardians of the darkest moors and bogs. Because the mists of Ravenloft both punish and reward those who do evil, it is impossible to guess at their ultimate purpose in creating fenhounds. Whatever else they might do, these beasts serve to torment those evil individuals who have not yet been condemned to the eternal tortures accorded to the lords of Ravenloft's various domains.

# Lich, Psionic

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Psionic energy
INTELLIGENCE:	Supra-genius (19-20)
TREASURE:	A
ALIGNMENT:	Any evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	9+18
THAC0:	11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d8+2
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Psionics, <i>mind struck</i> power, psionics-draining touch
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Psionics, spell immunities, struck only by +1 or better weapons, phylactery
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' tall)
MORALE:	Fanatic (17-18)
XP VALUE:	16,000

## PSIONICS SUMMARY

Level	Dis/Sci/Dev	Att/Def	Score	PSPs
20	6/10/25	all/all	18	82

**Clairsentience—Sciences:** aura sight, object reading; *Devotions:* spirit sense.

**Psychokinesis—Sciences:** none; *Devotions:* animate shadow.

**Psychometabolism—Sciences:** death field, life draining, shadow-form; *Devotions:* aging, cause decay, displacement, ectoplasmic form.

**Psychoportation—Sciences:** teleport; *Devotions:* astral projection (if not in Ravenloft), dimensional door, dream travel.

**Telepathy—Sciences:** domination, mindwipe, psychic crush, tower of iron will; *Devotions:* contact, ego whip, ESP, id insulation, inflict pain, intellect fortress, mental barrier, mind bar, mind blank, mind thrust, psionic blast, thought shield.

**Metapsionics—Sciences:** empower; *Devotions:* psionic sense, psychic drain, receptacle, wrench.

These powers are common to most psionic liches. It is not unusual, however, for individuals to have powers different from those given here. For more information on how psionics work in the RAVENLOFT™ setting, see the article, "Are You Having Bad Thoughts?" in this issue.

There are few who would dare to argue that the power of a master psionicist is any less than that of an archmage. Indeed, proof of this can be found in the fact that the most powerful psionicists are actually able to extend their lives beyond the spans granted them by nature, just as powerful wizards are known to do.

Psionic liches look much like their magical counterparts. Their flesh has mummified with the passing of time, pulling it tight over their bones and giving them a gaunt, skeletal appearance. Their eye sockets are empty and burn with crimson pinpoints of light like smoldering embers. Often, a psionic lich will be found in the clothes it favored in life. Because this can be anything from the grand robes of nobility to the plate armor of a mighty knight, it is impossible to spot these creatures by their garb. (Metallic armor, if worn, will lower the lich's psionic power score, as per *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, page 16; small shields will not do so.)

Psionic liches retain the abilities that they learned in life: languages, proficiencies, thieving skills, etc. Further, a psionic lich



who was human may actually have been a dual-class character in life, and thus be able to employ psionic powers plus magical or clerical spells. Creatures with such abilities are rare, thankfully, but are truly terrible opponents.

**Combat:** Psionic liches seldom engage their foes personally, as they surround themselves with legions of minions who do their bidding for them. Many adventurers, who are actually battling the proxies of a psionic lich, never learn the true nature of their enemy. When forced to engage in direct combat, however, psionic liches are among the most deadly opponents that any band of heroes is ever likely to face.

The emanations of power that shroud a psionic lich are detectable even by those without psychic powers of their own. Those who come within 50 yards of such creatures will be affected by this aura, requiring them to save vs. spells or become *mind struck*. Such characters make all attack, not to-hit and damage rolls at a -2 penalty and must double the casting time of any spells they attempt to employ (which allows saving throws for victims at +2). The effects of this aura can be countered by any magical spell or psionic power that would diminish or remove fear or inspire bravery.

The most deadly physical attack of a psionic lich is its dreaded touch. If the lich is able to deliver a blow in combat, the malign aura of psionic power that encircles it rips at the opponent's life force, causing 1d8 + 2 points of damage. In addition, psionic characters will find their psionic strength points drawn away by the lich. Each physical blow will strip the victim of a number of PSPs equal to twice the number of points of damage that the blow inflicted. This loss is not permanent, and the PSPs can be regained through normal means.

Just as normal liches have spent decades or even centuries in the research of new and unique magical powers, so too do the undead masters of the mind have powers undreamed of by mortal men. It is not at all uncommon for adventurers who come across these dreaded creatures to be confronted with psionic powers that have never been documented elsewhere and that

# Lich, Psionic

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morts are completely unprepared to face. (These new powers will conform to the general standards established in *The Complete Psionics Handbook* for function, damage, area of effect, range, etc., but may differ greatly from standard powers in terms of the effects that they cause. Insight into the creation of new psionic powers can be gleaned from the section on spell research in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Further information can be gained from the article, "Are You Having Bad Thoughts?" in this magazine.) Further, liches are able to employ magical items just as they did in life and may have quite a formidable collection of enchanted trinkets to use against adventurers.

It is important to note that psionic liches differ from the traditional ranks of the undead. Because the force sustaining them is mental and not mystical, they are far more resistant to spells, spell-like powers, or psionic sciences and devotions involving charm, fear, or the like. Treat them as having the equivalent of a 25 wisdom for purposes of determining what spells they are resistant to (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 17, Table 5). Spells like *sleep* or *finger of death*, which base their effects upon a biological function in the spell recipient, also do not affect psionic liches; again, psionic powers similar to these spells are also ineffective (e.g., life detection).

Psionic liches can be turned by priests, paladins, and similar characters, but since they are not magical in nature, they are more resistant to this power than are other undead. Thus, they are turned on the "special" row of the Turning Undead table. Psionic liches are immune to harm from normal weapons but can be struck by weapons of +1 or better power. Spells or other powers based upon cold have no effect upon them. Other spells inflict normal damage on the lich. Psionic liches can be attacked in normal psionic combat, except as noted before.

In order to protect itself from destruction, a psionic lich employs a special form of phylactery (see "Ecology") that houses its life force. Although a lich may be defeated in combat, it cannot be truly destroyed unless its phylactery can be found and obliterated. As most liches will take great care to protect these vital objects from the prying hands of heroes, this can be quite a challenge.

**Habitat/Society:** Psionic liches are powerful espers who have left behind the physical demands of life in pursuit of ultimate mental powers. They have little interest in the affairs of the living, except as they relate to the lich's search for psychic mastery and knowledge. Those who encounter the lich usually do so when the creature feels that it must leave its self-imposed isolation for a time.

Psionic liches often hide themselves away in some place that "feels" safe to them. Since most of them can sense the auras and emanations of the world around them quite keenly, their judgment is usually sound. For the most part, however, these creatures will reside in places associated with death or learning. If the two can be combined in some way, all the better. For example, an ideal lair for a psionic lich might be the great library of castle that was buried in a volcanic eruption long ago. Not only does the location bear the taste of death about it, for everyone in the castle was slain by the disaster, but it also has a solid foundation of knowledge for the lich to pursue research into the secrets of the mind.

When it comes out into the world, a psionic lich generally assembles a great network of minions. Curiously, these followers are seldom undead themselves. More often than not, they are young espers who seek to learn from an obvious master. What they often do not understand is that their leader has little interest in them apart from their role in any immediate plans. Once the master's goal has been accomplished, be it the retrieval of some ancient tome on psionic powers or the testing of a new psionic defense mode, the followers will be cast aside without thought. Those who do not simply leave when the lich demands

it will probably find themselves mercilessly slain.

The first psionic lich encountered in Ravenloft was reported on the fringes of Bluetspur, the dreaded domain of the mind flayers, in the land of Kartakass. There is some evidence that the creature was challenged and destroyed by Harkon Lukas, the master of that domain. Many scholars agree, however, that it seems probable that the lich escaped and survives to this day. Additional sightings of these horrible creatures leads one to believe that at least three more psionic liches have come into existence at various points in Ravenloft.

**Ecology:** Being undead, psionic liches have no place in the natural world as we know it. Although the power that transformed them is natural (not supernatural, like magic), the extent to which psionic liches have pursued their goals is not natural. By twisting the powers of their minds to extend their existence beyond the bounds of mortal life, psionic liches become exiles. Cast out from the land of the living, these creatures sometimes lament the foolishness that led them down the dark path of the undead.

By far the most important aspect of the existence of the psionic lich is the creation of its phylactery. To understand this mystical device, it is important to understand the process by which a psionicist becomes a lich. Before a psionicist can cross over into the darkness that is undeath, he must attain at least 18th level. In addition, he must be possessed of a great array of powers that can be bent and focused in ways new to the character.

The first step in the creation of a phylactery is the crafting of the physical object that will become the creature's spiritual resting place. Phylacteries come in all shapes, from rings to crowns and from swords to idols. They are made from only the finest materials and must be fashioned by master craftsmen. Generally, a phylactery is fashioned in a shape that reflects the personality of the psionicist. The cost of creating a phylactery is 5,000 gp per level of the character. Thus, a 20th-level psionicist must spend 100,000 gp on his artifact.

Once the phylactery is fashioned, it must be readied to receive the psionicist's life force. This is generally done by means of the metapsionic empower ability, with some subtle changes in the way that the psionicist uses the power that alters its outcome. In order to complete a phylactery, the psionicist must empower it with each and every psionic ability that he possesses. Although an object cannot normally be empowered with psychic abilities in more than one discipline, the unusual nature of the phylactery allows this rule to be broken. However, before "opening" a new discipline within the object, the would-be lich must transfer all of his powers from the first discipline into it. For example, if a character has telepathic and metapsionic abilities, he must complete the empowering of all of his telepathic powers before he begins to infuse the object with his metapsionic ones. Once a discipline is "closed," it cannot be reopened.

During the creation of the phylactery, the psionicist is very vulnerable to attack. Each time that he gives his phylactery a new power, he loses it himself. Thus, the process strips away the powers of the psionicist as it continues. Obviously, the last power that is transferred into the phylactery is the empower ability. The effort of placing this ability within the phylactery drains the last essences of the psionicist's life from him and completes his transformation into a psionic lich. At the moment that the transformation takes place, the character must make a system-shock survival roll. Failure indicates that his willpower was not strong enough to survive the trauma of becoming undead; his spirit breaks up and dissipates, making him forever dead. Only the powers of a deity are strong enough to revive a character who has died in this way; even a wish will not suffice.

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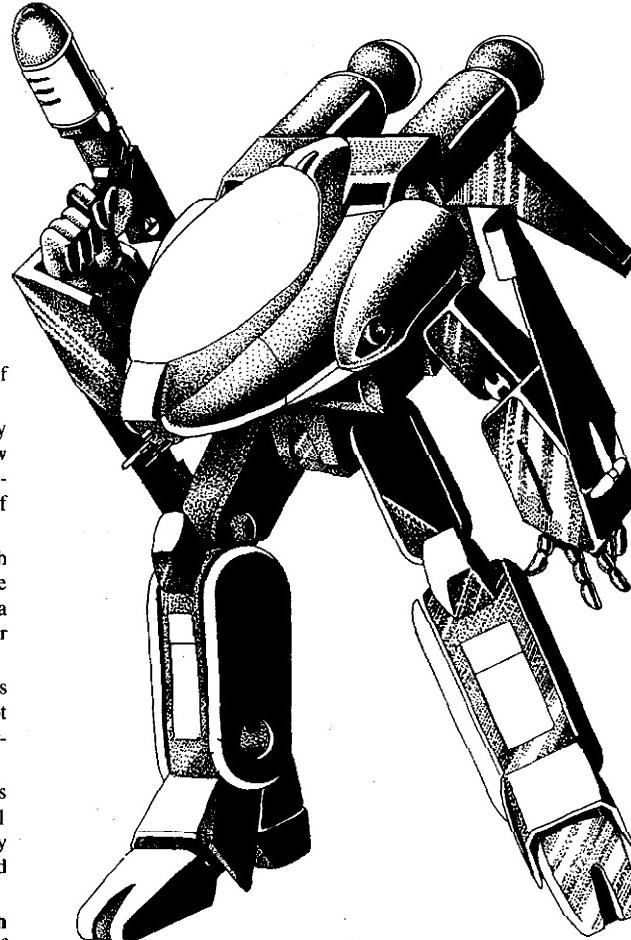
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**Volume Three:** Contains episodes 43: Prelude to Battle, 44: The Trap, 45: Metal Fire. Dana leads her squad into the alien mothership where they experience a number of strange things, encounter Musica, mistress of the Cosmic Harp, and barely escape a trap. Civilians are taken hostage and turned into the zombie-like pilots of bioroids. Zor is captured and the mystery and madness thickens. Available Mid-January, 1992.



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**Volume Four:** Episodes 46: Star Dust, 47: Outsiders, 48: Deja vu. Dana continues to exhibit a bit of empathy and psychic hunches and can not shake certain feelings about the captive bioroid pilot (Zor). Available late February, 1992.

**Volume Five:** Presents episodes 49: A New Recruit, 50: Triumvirate, 51: Clone Chamber. It is decided to induct Zor into the Army of the Southern Cross. A full scale assault is launched against the Masters. Zor, Dana and Bowie get closer to the secret of the Robotech Masters and protoculture. Plus epic space battles! Available late March, 1992.

**Volume Six:** Contains episodes 52: Love Song, 53: The Hunters, 54: Mind Game. Louie Nichols creates the Pupil Pistol, Dana is involved in more intrigue, while the savage space battle continues, with exciting fight sequences involving the Veritech Copter. Available late April, 1992.

**Volume Seven:** Presents episodes 55: Dana in Wonderland, 56: Crisis Point, and 57: Day Dreamer. The continues to escalate, with terrible consequences. Zor seems to be going mad, Dana is becoming more rebellious, Bowie finds love and the mystery continues. Available late May, 1992.

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# Cry Wolf!

Three magical wolves to haunt your heroes

by Tim Malto

Are your player characters getting a bit bored by the same old wilderness encounters? Do you need a new monster to prowl the back roads and remote villages of your campaign? Then try throwing your PCs to the wolves!

For the creation of the dread wolf, credit must be given to Richard A. Knaak's novel, *The Legend of Huma*, from the DRAGONLANCE® Heroes trilogy, volume 1 (Lake Geneva: TSR, Inc., 1988).



Dread wolf

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any  
FREQUENCY: Very rare  
ORGANIZATION: Pack or special  
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any  
DIET: None  
INTELLIGENCE: Average  
TREASURE: Nil  
ALIGNMENT: Neutral evil  
NO. APPEARING: 3d4  
ARMOR CLASS: 6  
MOVEMENT: 18  
HIT DICE: 4 +4  
THAC0: 15  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 1d10  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Cause disease  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Regeneration, immunities and resistances to certain spells  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil  
SIZE: Small (2'-4')  
MORALE: Fanatic (17)  
XP VALUE: 650

These creatures were originally created by a renegade mage, Galen Dracos of Krynn. But word of how to create these horrid creatures seems to have spread across the various Prime Material planes. These awful undead beasts can be the eyes and ears of any mage powerful enough to create them.

**Combat:** A dread wolf fights like any other wolf, biting and tearing with its fangs. But if a group of dread wolves is within its 50-mile control limit (see "Ecology"), it will fight under the direction of the controlling mage. If a group is outside this limit, the wolves will fight using normal pack tactics.

Artwork by Terry Pavlet



Dread wolves cause a nasty rotting disease that can infect a bitten opponent if the victim fails a save vs. poison one hour after the fight; failure means the loss of 1 hp per hour until death. Treatment within the first hour after combat by someone with the herbalist nonweapon proficiency adds +2 to the saving throw. A cure disease spell stops the disease.

During combat, a dread wolf has some real advantages. It regenerates like a troll, regaining 3 hp per round after the first combat round. Only acid, fire, or total dismemberment will do permanent damage to it. It is immune to charm, hold, and cold-based spells. Electrically based spells do only half damage.

Total dismemberment occurs when the creature's negative hit-point total is equal to or greater than its full positive hit-point total. However, the creature will fight until it reaches -10 hp. It will then go down until it regenerates back up to at least zero hit points.

**Habitat/Society:** As undead creatures, dread wolves have no society. The dread wolves reach a state of rotten decay soon after they are made. Their fur falls out, and they stink so badly that they can be smelled 120' downwind.

A mage can have no more than one group of wolves (see "Ecology") under his control at a time. The mage cannot give over control of his dread wolves to anyone else. To try either action causes the cessation of the spells animating the dread wolves and leads immediately to their permanent destruction.

Dread wolves have no interest in treasure, but the controlling mage can order them to find and bring back anything one of them can carry away in its mouth.

**Ecology:** As magically animated undead, dread wolves have no natural place in a world's ecosystem.

To create these servants, a mage must be evil and at least ninth level, and must have 3-12 wolves that have been dead for no more than a day. The spell-caster then begins a long incantation over the dead wolves that combines modified versions of *animate dead*, *summon shadow*, and *dismissal*. By doing this, the mage summons a shadow from the Negative Material plane and breaks it into parts. These parts are infused into the wolves as they animate, creating the dread wolves.

The spell-casting takes an hour. If the spell is interrupted, the energies of the shadow's separate parts are unleashed.

When this happens, the mage takes 3d10 points of physical damage (no save) from the otherworldly energy blast, just as if he had been caught in an ice *storm* spell.

At the end of the hour, the mage will have 3-12 servants that can travel up to 50 miles away and enable him to see and hear everything they see and hear. The wolves are directly under the control of the mage's mind within this distance.

The wolves can venture outside the 50-mile limit, but they lose contact with the controlling mage. Unless previous commands prevent this, the wolves will immediately try to get back within the 50-mile limit to regain contact. The dread wolves can be given a command of up to three short sentences (a total of 30 words), which they will cover any distance to fulfill. This command will always be fulfilled unless the dread wolves are destroyed first.

For some unknown reason, the spell that makes dread wolves will not work on dogs. If the mage tries to cast the spell on dogs, he will take 3d10 points of damage as described earlier.

## Vampiric wolf

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Pack

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Night

INTELLIGENCE: Low

TREASURE: Nil

ALIGNMENT: Any evil (as per creator)

NO. APPEARING: 3d6

ARMOR CLASS: 2

MOVEMENT: 24

HIT DICE: 6 +4

THAC0: 13

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 3d4

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Cause falling, grasping bite, high initiative

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Vampiric regeneration, immunities to certain spells and weapons

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: Small (2'-3½')

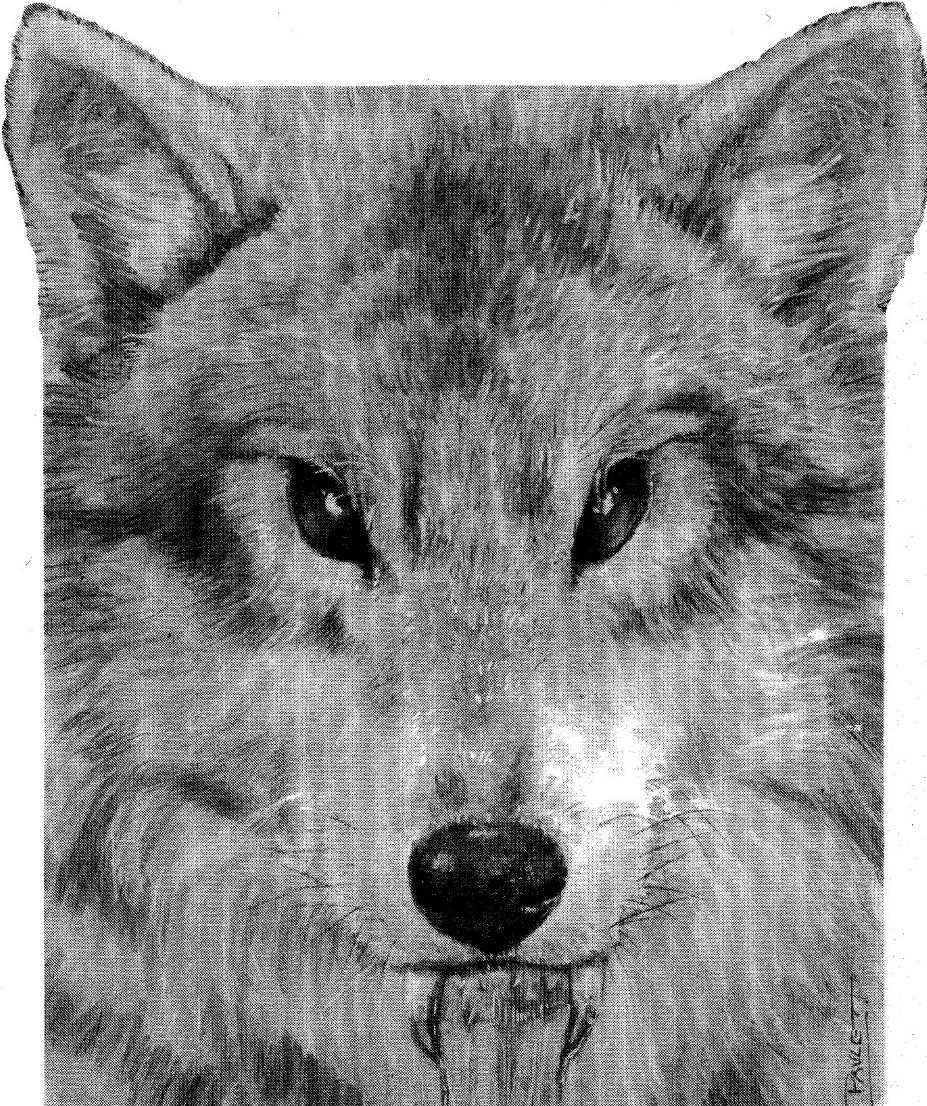
MORALE: Elite (13)

XP VALUE: 2,000

These foul undead creatures are the result of corrupting ceremonies used on normal wolf pups by certain evil clerics. Vampiric wolves are uniformly black, with feral, glowing orange eyes.

**Combat:** When vampiric wolves hunt, they follow normal pack tactics at first. They dash in small groups and attempt to hamstring their victim by attacking its legs. They do this until their victim is unable to escape. In game terms, a bite attack will cause a running or standing victim to fall if the victim fails a saving throw vs. paralysis.

Once their prey is down, the wolves do not kill their victim outright. Instead, they



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continue to attack in small groups until the victim can no longer resist effectively. If the victim is a human or demihuman, the attacks shift to his arms so that he can no longer use a weapon; this involves a called-shot attack in which a vampiric wolf has a -4 penalty to hit; success means the wolf has grasped an arm in its mouth, and the victim cannot get free unless he makes a strength roll on 4d6 (one attempt per round). A victim's legs may be similar grasped. Once a grasping bite is made, damage may be continually done each round as the wolf gnaws on the limb.

Once the victim is helpless, the vampiric wolves close in and drink the spilled blood, an act that takes as long as the victim lives while being held, plus 2-5 rounds. This renews the vampiric wolves' life force and also causes their eyes to glow a deep red for the next 12 hours.

Since they share some of the nature of vampires, these wolves can be tough opponents. Like vampires, they are quite strong, hence the higher damage from their bite. Also like vampires, they are extremely agile, giving them an bonus of +2 to their initiative rolls. They are more intelligent than normal wolves, causing their opponents to underestimate what the wolves will do next.

Vampiric wolves share some of the magical characteristics of vampires. They are immune to sleep, charm, hold, and paralysis-based spells. Only silver weapons

or magical weapons of +1 value or better can do actual damage in melee. They also regenerate in a special fashion, instantly gaining the same number of hit points they inflict as damage on an opponent.

Unlike a vampire, these wolves cannot charm their victims. Also unlike a vampire, they take full damage from cold-based attacks, as well as from fiery or electrically based attacks. They can move about in daylight, though they normally choose not to do so. When attacking in daylight, they have a -2 penalty to hit.

**Habitat/Society:** Vampiric wolves regard the cleric who created them as their pack leader. They will accept no other as pack leader except their own strongest member. Any other person who tries to command them will be attacked.

As pack leader, the cleric who creates the vampiric wolves has complete control over them. He is able to understand the moods and body language of his pack. In turn, the pack can understand simple commands of up to four words. The wolves will obey these commands, even when left on their own for three or four months at a time.

But, as pack leader, the cleric also faces some danger. Wolves do not accept weakness in their leader. Should the cleric show any sign of physical weakness or unfitness to command the pack's respect (at the DM's determination), the pack will turn on him. It is definitely not a good idea to be

sick, seriously wounded, or mentally slow in front of these wolves!

Should the wolves successfully turn on and kill the cleric who was their leader, they will run free. They will avoid contact with humans or demihumans unless the latter are hunting the vampiric wolves. These wolves are even more dangerous in this situation because they are familiar with civilized customs.

Vampiric wolves have no interest in treasure. However, the cleric that is the pack leader will often use them as guards for an entrance to his lair. It is a better than even chance that there is a concealed entrance nearby if the wolves are found near what appears to be a wolf den.

**Ecology:** Being undead, these creatures have no place in the natural order. They destroy things and give back nothing.

In order to create these foul corruptions of nature, a cleric must be evil and at least ninth level. He can use 3-18 pups from one or more wolf dens. The pups must be very close to being weaned away from their mother, but cannot have tasted meat or they will be useless.

The evil cleric first performs a ceremony using what amounts to the opposite of an *atonement* spell. Then, every day he must hand feed the pups. The food can be no more than one day old; it must also be infused with one or two drops of blood from a living human or dust from a vampire and cursed using a reversed *bless* spell. This must continue every day for three months or the pups die. At the end of the three-month period, the pups are fully grown and must then be slain by poisoning; they then arise as vampiric wolves. If they are not slain at this time, the wolves must each make a saving throw vs. death magic or become greatly weakened (1 hp per hit die), living on as blood-thirsty but otherwise normal wolves.

It should be noted that it is impossible to create vampiric dogs. Man's long partnership with dogs seems to have robbed them of some essential characteristic needed to make the change work.

## Stone wolf

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Special

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any

DIET: None

INTELLIGENCE: Animal

TREASURE: Nil (see below)

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

NO. APPEARING: 1d4

ARMOR CLASS: 0

MOVEMENT: 9

HIT DICE: 5 + 4

THAC0: 15

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2d4

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Initiative bonus, *pounce*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immunities and re-



sistances to certain spells and weapons

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: M (5'-6')

MORALE: Fearless (20)

XP VALUE: 1,400

As these creatures are animated stone, their appearances can vary widely along a wolf theme. The only similarity between all stone wolves is the use of white-hot fire opals as their eyes.

**Combat:** Melee with stone wolves can be tricky. The change from motionless statue to moving creature is almost unnoticeable, giving them a +4 initiative bonus in the first round of combat. On a natural 20 attack roll, the wolf has made a successful leap and pounce. This means that it has pinned its opponent underneath it and caused an extra 1d6 points of crushing damage. A successful bend bars/lift gates roll is needed to escape (one roll per five rounds is allowed). All dexterity and shield bonuses are canceled for the period of time the victim is trapped, and the stone wolf gets a +4 attack bonus.

Missile fire, even at point-blank range, does only one point of damage per arrow, stone, or bolt to a stone wolf. Edged weapons do only half damage. Blunt, smashing weapons do full damage. Magical weapons always get their full bonuses.

Stone wolves have one particular weakness: their eyes. If a character uses the

called-shot optional rules from *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, page 65, he can go for a stone wolf's eyes. Should the character succeed, he may roll a second 1d20. On a roll of 1 or 2, the character has succeeded in smashing both fire-opal eyes, immediately destroying the wolf. Otherwise he has destroyed one eye, giving the wolf a -4 penalty to attack on its blind side.

Stone wolves are immune to *sleep*, *hold*, *charm*, and all cold- or paralysis-based spells. They take half or no damage from fiery or electrically based spells, depending on whether or not they save vs. spells. A *stone to flesh* spell makes the wolves vulnerable to all weapons and gives them AC 10 if they fail a save vs. spells. A *transmute rock to mud* or *disintegrate* spell will destroy a stone wolf instantly if it fails a save vs. spells. An *earthquake* spell will cause 6d8 points of damage (half damage if a save vs. spell is made). A *move earth* spell will turn one stone wolf into a statue permanently if the creature fails a save vs. spells (since the creature is animated, it gets a saving throw). A *wall of stone* spell will disperse the creature's mass into the newly created wall if the stone wolf fails a save vs. spells. If it makes its saving throw, there is a 50% chance that the creature is on the same side of the new wall as the caster. A *magic missile* spell does normal damage.

**Habitat/Society:** As animated creatures, stone wolves have no true society

other than their relationship with the mage who created them. The mage can call the wolves to him at any time. They will find him immediately, even though they cannot track by smell. They can track by sight or hearing if necessary.

Since stone wolves are created beings, they have no treasure of their own. However, since they are often set to guard objects that mages value, it is reasonable to assume that there is something worthwhile nearby.

**Ecology:** As artificial creatures, stone wolves are not part of the natural order. These creatures are created by a mage of the ninth level or higher using a specially modified *stone shape* spell followed the next day by a specially modified *animate dead* spell. The recipients of these two spells are up to four large lumps of purified clay. Embedded within each clay lump must be the skull of a wolf and two 1,000 gp fire opals that will serve as the glowing eyes once the wolf shape is formed. During the one-day period between the formation of the wolf shape and the casting of the *animate dead* spell variant, the mage may cast no other spells of any kind.

After the second spell is cast, the mage will have up to four guardians that he can set to guard any item or room he chooses. Stone wolves never sleep. They stand as still as statues until a stranger gets close to the item or enters the room.

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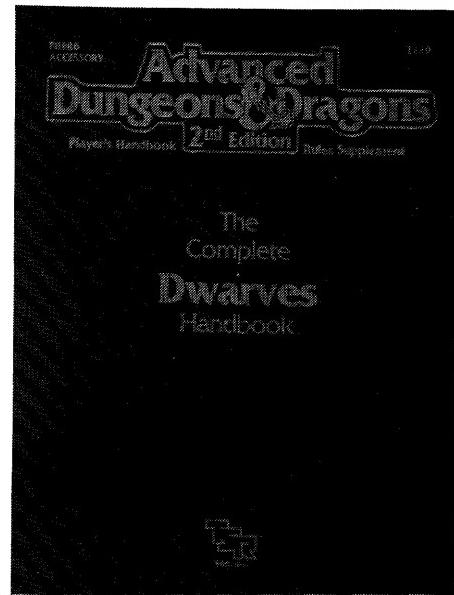
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We also have "The Ecology of the Dakon" in the hopper, along with a general article on elephants, but that's all.

The purpose of the "Ecology" articles is to offer in-depth information on particular monsters that, first of all, makes entertaining reading. It helps if the author can carry off a bit of fiction in which to frame the monster, showcasing its particular talents. We prefer action-oriented stories over "lecture notes" whenever possible, though some tales of lectures given have been quite fun to read.

We also like to see authors bring these monsters and races to life in their campaigns, adding new information to make them much more interesting to use in gaming scenarios. If a Dungeon Master reads over an "Ecology" article on the minotaur and enjoys it enough to create an AD&D scenario involving minotaurs, using the supplementary information in the article, then we consider the article to have been a particular success. New information added by an author should be carefully considered and well detailed, without greatly changing the original monster in any way. The "Ecology" piece on minotaurs would have been rejected if it had stated that all minotaurs were experienced psionics users, for instance, but it did further detail the minotaur's sensory and tracking abilities, present a reasonable minotaur social structure, and add combat notes for minotaurs that kick or punch.

We have been asked many times to name the monsters we most want to see described in "Ecology" articles. Rather than do that, we recommend that potential authors look through the various volumes of the AD&D 2nd Edition Monstrous Compendium and select those monsters in which they are most interested. There are many monsters left to detail, particularly from the FORGOTTEN REALMS®, WORLD OF GREYHAWK®, DRAGONLANCE®, DARK SUN™, SPELLJAMMER™, RAVENLOFT™, and Kara-Ttr campaign settings. New monsters also appear in AD&D modules and in supplements such as the Complete Psionics Handbook. After checking with the editors to make sure that we might be interested in an "Ecology" article on a particular monster, the road is generally clear to write up the beast, though the editors must still decide if they will accept the final article.

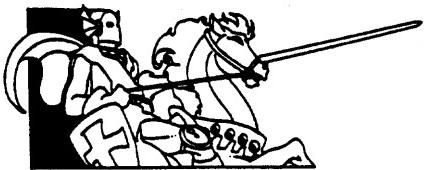
We are open to "Ecology" articles for the D&D game as well, particularly if the monsters covered are not duplicated from the AD&D game. This rich field is so far untouched.

And a final warning: Don't write up "The Ecology of the Giant Space Hamster." That one is anticipated for possible use next April.

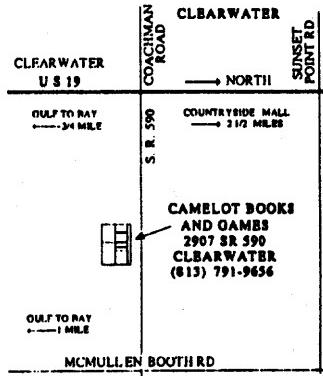
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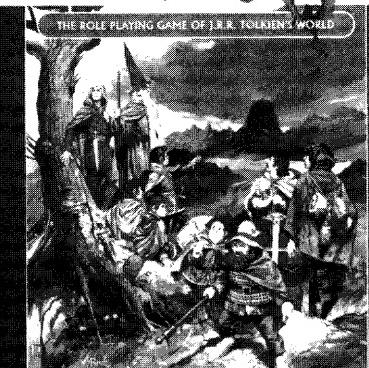
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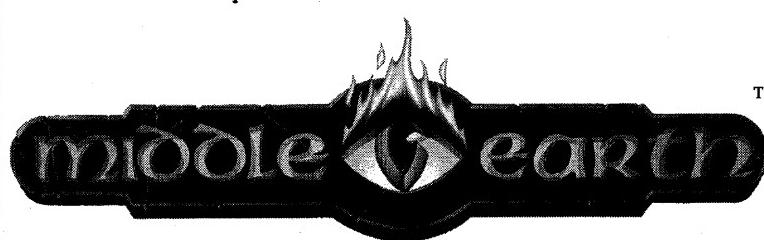
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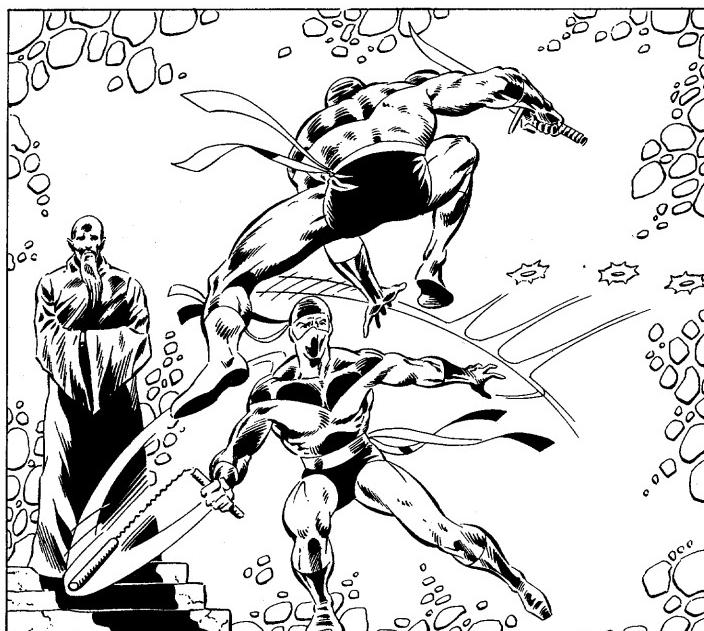
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# THE MARVEL®-PHILE

I'd never thought I'd grow nostalgic over some of my old comic books so soon. Believe it or not, I miss the "old days" of Marvel Comics when I was growing up. I miss the strange, convoluted adjectives; everything was uncanny, stellar, stupendous, or gregarious. I miss the subtitles the villains and heroes used to accentuate their identities; wasn't it terrifying to face off against Krakoa, the Island That Walked Like a Man? Anyone remember when Kang was "the Conqueror" and not just one of a tribunal of beings in time-travel gear? And I miss Medusa being "the most fabulous super-powered glamazon in the history of comicdom!"

The times have changed, and we've all changed with them. Marvel Comics and the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ role-playing game are still lots of fun, but something is different. The villains are harsher, the heroes less confident of their morality, and many mysteries have been uncovered. One of the great mysteries was what Captain America's shield was made of, and I enjoyed it when we didn't know who the Hobgoblin was. (We still haven't seen the face of Dr. Doom, and they haven't named the Nameless Ones yet.)

In honor of days gone by, "The MARVEL®-Phile" begins a short trip down memory lane, knee-deep in nostalgia (the menace that lurks beneath the dust). This month we present Equinox, the Thermodynamic Man! (Doesn't that name strike deadly fear into your heart?) His only appearances were in Marvel Team-Up issues #23, #59, and #60, the last published in 1977. Even without hundreds of appearances, he's a wonderful villain with lots of potential, so blow the dust off him and put him into the game. Only your players' heroes will regret it.

## EQUINOX™

**Terry Sorenson, criminal**

F	GD(10)	Health: 80
A	GD(10)	
S	IN(40)	Karma: 42
E	EX(20)	
R	TY(6)	Resources: PR(4)
I	TY(6)	
P	RM(30)	Popularity: 0

Lesser lights, part 1: A villain for all seasons



## POWERS:

**Body Armor:** Equinox's altered and condensed body tissue grants him Excellent (20) resistance to physical damage, and Good (10) resistance to energy damage.

**Thermodynamic Flux:** Equinox's body is in a constant state of thermodynamic flux. Theoretically, his body is constantly absorbing and expelling heat energy in massive amounts, resulting in coruscating flame and ice over his body. While his torso is covered in flames, Equinox fires ice bolts from his hands; the flames show that his body is absorbing the heat around him to reflexively create ice. When covered in ice, he fires bolts of fire; he is expelling all the heat within his body through his flame blasts. The thermic changes and fluxes within Equinox's body have affected his mind, making him unstable, relatively amoral, and hostile.

These thermal changes grant him the following powers:

**Flame/Ice Corona:** The rippling fire and ice coverings that appear during Equinox's thermal changes grant him Class 1000 resistance to fire/heat and ice/cold attacks. He is not resistant to the physical effects of solid ice (such as the loss of traction), but normal temperatures and hot or cold energy attacks have little effect on him. However, if attacked by Excellent or greater intensity fire and ice simultaneously, Equinox's thermodynamic energy erupts in a Remarkable-force explosion that affects everything in Equinox's area. The flame corona melts any material in contact with it of less than Excellent material strength.

**Fire & Ice Generation:** Equinox generates Remarkable-intensity fire and ice with a range of two areas. The only power stunts Equinox has developed are to use ice to create slides and entangle foes.

## EQUIPMENT:

**Shielding Suit:** Equinox formerly wore a "protective shielding suit" made of an unknown metal. Presumably, this full-body suit contained and controlled Equinox's temperature fluxes and thus kept him mentally stable. The only time Equinox was capable of firing both fire and ice bolts at once was while wearing this suit. Unless he comes into possession of another such suit, he is incapable of firing both types of bolts at once. The suit was made of Good-rank materials but did not grant more protection from attacks.

**TALENTS:** None known.

**HISTORY:** Equinox was born Terrance "Terry" Sorenson, the son of Drs. David and Margay Sorenson. While Terry grew up, his mother became a famous figure in the natural science division at Bard College in New York. His father, however, did not gain the same fame his wife did, due to his unconventional theories on thermodynam-

ics. He began taking out his frustrations on his wife, physically abusing her. Margay soon left her husband and son to escape the abuse.

David began drinking in his basement lab, its confines filled with makeshift computers and jury-rigged systems to test his theories. Margay returned in time to see an entire wall of the house shatter from an explosion. Making their way to the basement, Terry and Margay found the lab engulfed in flames and David pinned under fallen equipment, his leg broken. Terry rushed in to help his father when unidentified energy beams erupted from David's damaged equipment. The energy killed David but transformed Terry into the being who would soon be called Equinox.

Dr. Sorenson took a leave of absence to care for her son and to search for a cure for his condition. She had to reconstruct David's notes and teach herself a new physical science from the ground up. One of her early attempts to cure Terry was the creation of his "protective shielding suit." But soon her money reserves ran out, and Terry began to steal the equipment they needed for his cure.

The Human Torch, acting on a tip from Spider-Man, was inspecting Faversham's Jewelry Store when he found a patch of ice that hadn't melted in the heat of the day. The Torch was then blindsided by an ice bolt, and his assailant escaped.

Acting on the evidence he'd gathered, the Torch confronted Iceman, convinced he'd been the one who robbed Faversham's store. After a minor battle between the Torch and Iceman was broken up by the original X-Men, the pair teamed up to solve the mystery.

Returning to the jewelry store, they arrived to see a blast demolish one wall of the store. Entering through the hole, they found its edges were hot and smooth, as if someone had melted through the wall. In the darkened store, the two heroes were simultaneously hit by bolts of fire and ice fired by Equinox.

As Equinox attempted to flee with a package of stolen goods, Iceman felled him with an ice blast that tore his protective suit. Apparently, the suit regulated Terry's temperature changes, and the tear canceled that property of the suit. As his temperature changes returned, the changes caused him to become more aggressive and hostile; before the suit was damaged, Terry just wanted to get away with his package and work on a cure for his condition. Equinox ripped off the remainder of his shielding suit and battled the Torch and Iceman.

Equinox managed to escape with his package, but the two heroes caught up with him later. Simultaneously firing blasts of ice and fire, Iceman and Torch hit Equinox (quote) "at the precise moment of his molecular change." This temporarily halted Equinox's internal fluctuations, and his

stored excess energy caused an explosion. All that remained was his package—an atomic clock used to regulate time intervals—and a crater in the street leading to the sewers. Equinox was presumed dead, but he actually escaped through the sewers to safety.

Months later, Spider-Man was attacked over the Queensborough Bridge by a blast of fire that changed to ice as it traveled toward him. The blast of fire/ice was spotted from a nearby apartment by Hank and Janet Pym, a.k.a. Yellowjacket and the Wasp. Yellowjacket rescued the unconscious Spider-Man from the East River, and the couple brought him to their home.

Spider-Man was revived and deduced his assailant's identity as Equinox. The villain soon attacked the trio at the apartment. The battle destroyed much of the Pym's penthouse, and the resulting rubble and commotion caused a massive traffic jam on the streets below. Yellowjacket used his "improved disruptor stings" to blast Equinox out the window. The Thermodynamic Man created an ice slide to break his fall and brought the fight down to the street.

As the heroes pursued Equinox and continued the battle, Dr. Sorenson arrived with her latest invention, intending to stop Terry's mad rampage. Equinox responded by throwing a car at her in an attempt to kill her. She was pulled from its path by Spider-Man, but its gas tank exploded, and the Wasp was knocked unconscious from the blast.

Fighting Equinox alone, Yellowjacket managed to move the fight away from much of the traffic and his injured wife. Equinox blasted a nearby fuel truck with a fire blast, and the truck exploded. Equinox survived, but it appeared that Yellowjacket had died in the explosion.

Dr. Sorenson used her latest invention—a thermic stabilizer gun—to attempt to cure Equinox, but the gun's energy had no effect on him at all. The heroes and the doctor left Equinox and went to the Baxter Building to use the Fantastic Four's laboratory to attempt to discover a better cure for Equinox.

The fight in midtown caused a power surge and outage throughout Manhattan, but power was soon restored. Unfortunately, the heroes were inside the Baxter Building, and the surge caused the security computers to see them as a threat. Spider-Man and Dr. Sorenson made it safely to the lab, while the Wasp was trapped in the ventilation shafts. She quickly made her way to the control center and shut off the security systems before the building was flooded with gas.

Spider-Man managed to jury-rig Dr. Sorenson's gun with a harness to increase the effectiveness of the thermic stabilizing energy. Equinox attacked the lab (with no resistance from the disabled security systems) and was on the verge of defeating Spider-Man when Yellowjacket appeared.

# MARVEL

Yellowjacket's "death" and reappearance caused the Wasp to produce adrenalin, the final ingredient needed to complete some adaptations Yellowjacket had made to her powers. These events triggered her increased powers, a birthday gift from her husband, and she used her more powerful "wasp's sting" to nearly knock out Equinox. Yellowjacket placed the stabilizer harness on the stunned Equinox, which temporarily neutralized his powers.

Equinox was last seen being taken to police headquarters by the Pyms and his mother. It has been a number of years in Marvel time since he has been seen, cured or not. Equinox's current condition and whereabouts are unknown.

**ROLE-PLAYING NOTES:** Equinox generally acts like a typical, megalomaniacal supervillain, lashing out forcefully and dangerously at anything in his path. He is in his late teens or early twenties, and he is becoming insane. His speech patterns frequently switch from a sophisticated adult to a slang-using teenager. Early in his career as Equinox, Terry simply wanted to be cured of his condition. His constant

changes affected his mind, and he became cruel, vindictive, amoral, and generally hostile. Any frustrations or feelings of defeat are attacked with ferocity, including his own mother's attempts to cure him.

In your campaigns, Equinox might still not be cured, and he might escape to rob various establishments for the electronics he needs to cure his condition. This scenario makes him a desperate villain with much to lose if he is arrested by your heroes. A slightly different option is that Terry was at least temporarily cured of his condition, which explains his absence from the comics. Only recently has he reverted to being the Thermodynamic Man. In this state, he could be quite desperate or even paranoid. It will be up to your heroes to either try to help him or just treat him like a common thug and beat the tar out of him.

Another scenario is that Equinox's mind has further deteriorated from his still-occurring changes, and he is a powerful, mindless menace loose in your heroes' city. A fourth option is that Terry has managed to gain control over his changes. He could be recruited as a villain (by the Masters of

Evil or the Kingpin, for example) or, if his mind is returned to normal, a hero (perhaps by the New Warriors or your own players' hero team).



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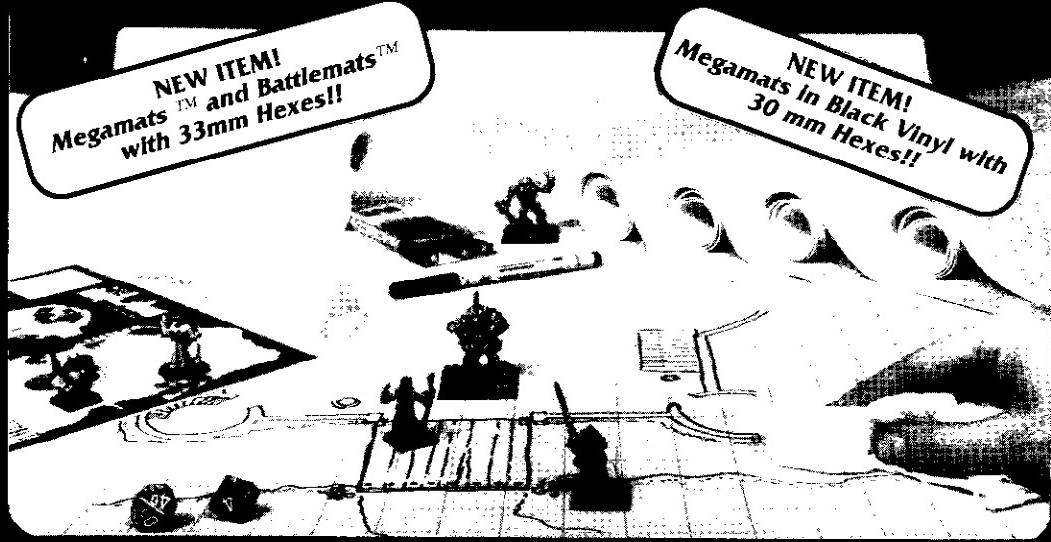
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# Bugged About Something?

If your AD&D® characters aren't afraid of insects, they soon will be

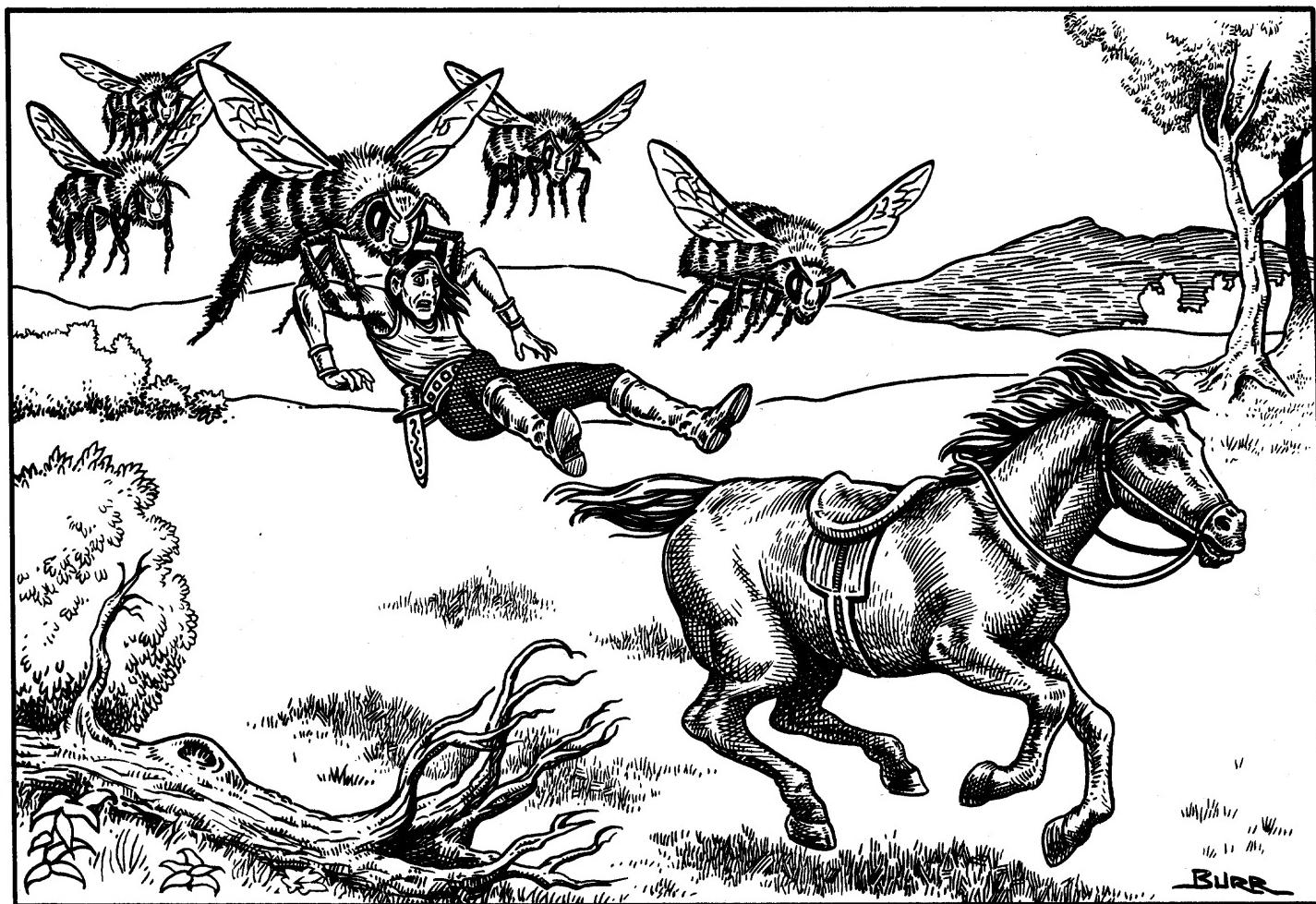
by Gregory W. Detwiler

All three monster books of the AD&D® 1st Edition game, along with various monster collections in DRAGON® Magazine, feature a variety of giant insects as opponents. Many of these big bugs are now in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendiums*. Characters generally consider insects to be unexciting foes, even in their giant forms, in part because insects are "mere" animals (the fact that the players themselves are colossi when compared to real-life insects doesn't help, either). It's much harder to fear a giant insect to the same degree possible with giants or dragons. Even if you're a fan of 1950s science-fiction movies, it doesn't help, as the AD&D giant insects are all far smaller than their movie counterparts. Just compare the giant mutant ants in *Them!* with the "puny" two-footers in the AD&D 1st Edition *Monster Manual*.

The main reason why giant insects are so slighted in fantasy campaigns, however, is that neither players or the DM have sufficient knowledge of insect capabilities to realize what a gross extrapolation of those capabilities can mean. This article means to change that.

## Strength

When compared to the body of a vertebrate animal, the insectoid exoskeleton provides a much greater surface area for muscles to connect. The plasticlike chitin



of which the exoskeleton is composed has the ability to bend and store great amounts of elastic energy. When you consider that insects have more muscles per body area than any vertebrate animal, and those muscles are on a body that can store up energy like a taut bow, you have a very impressive combination indeed.

Consider these facts from the weird realm of real life. A flea can leap a distance of 130 times its own length, an ant can carry fifty times its own weight, and a bee's ability for hauling is equivalent to a grown man lugging around a 30-ton truck. Impressive enough. Now consider the implications in a fantasy game.

Given the carrying power of ants, one of the AD&D games' two-footers ought to be able to physically drag away a human, even one in armor. [Your editors estimate that a 2'-long ant would weigh about 15 lbs.] If ants try to block the characters' entry into their nest by building a barricade, they will finish the job far sooner than anyone would expect. If even one ant gets past your front battle line (an easy thing in a poorly lighted dungeon setting), it could disrupt the party's defensive formation by yanking characters off their feet. All the bees and wasps in the game are at least man sized (the giant bumblebee is size L); if a bee or wasp can carry loads equivalent to a man carrying a 30-ton truck, then a man-sized bee or wasp

should be able to carry 30 tons all by itself! Look at the equipment list on page 67 of the 2nd Edition Player's Handbook, where the transport is listed. Small canoes, carriages, coaches, chariots, rafts, small sailboats, sedan chairs, small wagons and keelboats—a giant wasp or bee can carry them all. Needless to say, they could also carry off all but the largest animals and monsters, to say nothing of player characters.

Since bees die right after they sting, the giant bees in a fantasy world might have developed an alternative attack: carrying foes as high in the air as they can fly, then dropping them. It seems right that since stinging ends a bee's life, more emphasis should be put on making the sting a weapon of last resort.

Combining the hardness of the exoskeleton with insect strength produces deadly combinations. The jaws of the most powerful "normal" beetles can bore into zinc, copper, tin, and lead. Scaling up, the giant slicer and water beetles should be able to destroy with one bite any metallic weapon or suit of armor (at least the nonmagical ones). A magically trained force of these beetles might be able to bore into virtually any castle or stone building. In the case of wooden structures, of course, you can substitute giant termites. I leave to your imagination the consequences of a giant water beetle boring its way into the hull of

a vessel in the middle of a lake,

### Detection capabilities

Insects are often equipped with a vast array of varied sense organs, many of them stored in the antennae. Aside from the normal sort of generalized five senses humans have, insects can have specialized sensory organs to detect light, shape, color, movement, ultraviolet radiation, heat, polarized light, touch, sound, internal pressure, water pressure, air pressure, and humidity. In a magical universe, it would not be illogical for some insects to have developed sensors for magic detection. Not all insects have all of these varied detectors, of course, but the array at the normal insect's disposal is sufficient to render most normal concealment methods useless.

Some insects, such as army ants, are nearly or totally blind, and thus use their sense of smell to detect prey. This nullifies magical concealment spells such as *blur* and the various *invisibility* spells, to say nothing of ordinary camouflage. Sensors that detect sound or movement (ground pressure) can be equally effective. "Blinding" the insect can be a difficult job. The sensors can be found anywhere on an insect, particularly on the antennae, foot pads, and mouth feelers, and insects go in heavily for redundancy. The male bee's main purpose in life is to mate with the



queen; each of his two antennae contains 30,000 sense organs specializing in merely detecting the *odor* of the queen bee. To damage an insect's sense capability enough for you to make a getaway, you need to inflict enough damage to kill the insect, in which case escape is unnecessary.

Never underestimate the powers of an insect's sense organs. The infamous killer bees of South America have been known to chase fleeing humans into darkened buildings. In the AD&D game, similar talents would make a mockery of the cover provided by a *darkness, 15' radius* spell. Social insects (ants, bees, wasps, and termites) coordinate their attacks by the spreading of chemical scents, or pheromones, that can be detected and understood by all insects in the battle area. This last insect talent does have a possible counter. If you can hit an attacking force of social insects with a strong enough wind, as with a *gust of wind* spell, you may be able to blow away sufficient pheromones to totally disorganize the attackers. On the other hand, the DM may well rule that the wind merely spreads the scent farther, summoning even more insects to the attack.

Next to a pure diviner, the illusionist will be the specialist wizard most helpless in the face of an insect attack. With the multiplicity of sensory organs an insect has, each organ constantly testing the environ-

ment, an illusion of an object familiar to the insect has virtually no chance of succeeding. *Hallucinatory forest* and *hallucinatory terrain* are thus useless as cover, as are illusory walls, pits, etc. Needless to say, illusions of spells like *fireball* will not even be recognized, much less believed, and the same goes for most illusory monsters that won't "check out" under a sensory test. Illusions that do real damage require more levels of the caster than most illusionists who face giant insects will have. If the bugs want you, they'll always be able to find you.

### Inherent toughness

One of the secrets of insect adaptability is the fact that many species are resistant to some of the things that make life difficult for everyone else, such as cold weather and poison. Those insects that live in arctic conditions can survive for at least two months when the temperature is -20°F. The secret is that their blood is 20% glycerol, giving them a natural antifreeze. In cold regions, any native insects encountered should have a saving-throw bonus of at least +1 against any cold-based attacks such as *cone of cold*. Similarly, many insects are virtually poison proof, particularly those who eat poisonous prey. The preying mantis has been known to eat even the black widow spider without coming to harm. One entomologist took a

dead wasp (already a poisonous creature) and fed it to a mantis after liberally coating the dinner with a variety of poisons, including arsenic. The mantis gobbled down the poisoned prey, suffering no harm whatsoever. A giant one should be similarly immune to poisons of all kinds. Insects have also proven resistant to heat, vacuum, and even nuclear radiation (from 100,000-300,000 roentgens are required to kill most adult insects, while a mere 1,000 roentgens will kill a grown man). GAMMA WORLD® game players, beware!

In short, the average insect is a very tough, scary customer for its size. A giant one, even by itself, should be able to wreak unimaginable havoc with a party of adventurers. No need for you DMs out there to spread the word to your players, of course; they'll find out about it soon enough—the hard way.  $\Omega$

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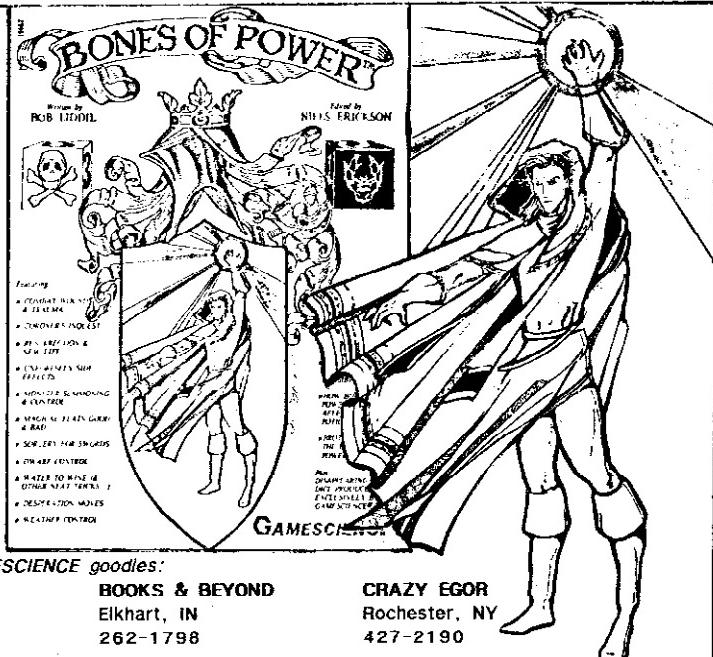
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# The Game Wizards

Collect them all! The AD&D™ Trading Cards, 1991 Series—and beyond

by James M. Ward

The AD&D™ fantasy trading cards, which first appeared in DRAGON® issue #160 and have since been released in displays, have been one of TSR's biggest hits in recent years. But TSR underestimated the demand. There was no way we could know what a smash hit these cards would be. This article is designed to provide all the facts on the cards so you can judge for yourself how useful they will be to your fantasy campaigns.

The primary purpose of the trading cards is to be used in any AD&D® game. The color picture on the front of each card and the AD&D game information on the back are designed to provide quick information that is easily used in a night's adventuring. From the letters that we have received, the cards have been highly successful in that area.

The secondary purpose of the trading cards is to be an interesting collectable item. In the normal collectable card market, there are rare cards in each set. This has been done in our cards as well. Ninety cards in the 1991 series are particularly rare. No attempt was made to make these rare cards special in terms of the information they carry. One rare card is put in approximately every fifth foil package.

There are 750 cards in the 1991 collector set. Sixteen cards are in each \$1.00 foil package, and 36 foil packages are in each display box (it's called a "wax box" in the collector-card trade, even if the packages aren't waxed). I have been told that it is possible to get half of the numbered cards in either the June print run (the first half of the 1991 series) or the September print run (the second half of the 1991 series) in one wax box of 576 cards. Usually, you will get most of one of the two print runs in two boxes. The wax boxes in the June release have a light blue background; the boxes in the September release have a much darker green-blue background.

One of the questions we are commonly asked is: Why didn't TSR print all of the cards in the first release of the set in June? The answer lies in the production process. It takes a long time to design 750 different cards with 750 different pieces of colored art and 750 texts of rules-heavy informa-

tion. It will always be necessary to print a year's series of these cards in two parts just because of the time it takes to create them.

For the 1992 series, the first half should come out about May; the second half about July; and the factory set should come out about August, right in time for the 25th anniversary of the GEN CON® game fair. Below is a breakdown of the types of trading cards produced this year:

1. Cards numbered 1-17 appeared in DRAGON issue #160. These prototype cards were designed by the DRAGON Magazine staff and are substantially different from the final product. I received over 500 letters on these first DRAGON cards, and from these comments we came up with the final version of the collector cards. Thank you very much for that input. I found all of those letters useful, and they were much appreciated. I have always said that the DRAGON Magazine reader was a cut above the normal role-player, and your input from those letters proved this.

I am happy to say that every year from now on, DRAGON Magazine and DUNGEON® Adventures will run the first 17 cards in each year's set of trading cards. This will give all of the magazine readers a nice bonus for buying these magazines. At the present time, we are looking at the February or May issues of both magazines to have the cards.

2. Cards numbered 18-367 were in the June 1991 release of the cards. One set of rare cards in this first release have the following numbers: 262, 265, 279, 296, 298, 304, 321, 323, 354, 365. Approximately 3,000 of each were made. Other rare cards include: 28, 36, 42, 77, 79, 93, 108, 119, 125, 126, 144, 159, 204, 208, 216, 219, 224, 243, 247, 251; approximately 4,000 of each were made. About 50,000 copies of each of the other cards in the first half of the 1991 set were made.

3. Cards numbered 368-737 were in the September release of the cards. One group of rare cards in this second release have the following numbers: 620, 628, 654, 659, 668, 675, 679, 710, 722, 728; approximately 10,000 of each were made. The

second group of rare cards consists of: 381,396,400,404,412,424,434,456,466, 493, 512, 517, 523, 536, 541, 545, 563, 587, 602, 614; approximately 13,000 of each were made. About 160,000 copies of each of the other cards in this second half of the 1991 set have been printed.

4. Cards numbered 738-745 were part of a special Diamond Comic Distributor promotion. They were given away free in the Diamond Comic newsletter sent to retailers across America. These cards don't look like any of the other cards because they were created while TSR was still trying to give the cards their own unique look. These cards come in either an 8" X 7" or 5¾" X 7" sheet, with four cards to each sheet. I still have a supply of these sheets. I would be happy to send one sheet free to anyone who will send me a large, self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) and a nice letter telling me about the cards and asking me for that sheet. I'll send them out one to a person as long as supplies last. Remember to send an envelope large enough for the sheet so I don't have to fold the sheet. If you don't get one, I ran out—so write now!

5. The card numbered 746 was our only DARK SUN™ card for the year. It was much larger than normal, measuring 10" X 7¼". This card was a special Capital City Distributor promotion. These were given away free in the Capital City newsletter sent to retailers across America.

6. At the time of this writing, the last four cards, numbered 747-750, haven't been designed yet. They are going to go into our factory set of cards, which comes out in November and will have all 750 cards. All of these cards will be in the most current design.

All first-run AD&D collector cards (except for cards numbered 1-17, 738-745, 746, and 747-750) have a gold border on the color side. DRAGON issue #171 ran duplicates of some of the rare cards; all of these have a black border around the color side. The factory set of 750 cards will have a silver border around the color side. This coloring instantly allows you to see which printing a card is from. All of the cards in the factory set will be of the normal collector size. The DARK SUN card #746 will be downsized, and cards numbered 1-17 will undergo radical changes to make them fit the new card format. The other special cards will all be presented in the new format.

TSR will never reprint cards from year to year. This would change the value of your cards. If any cards become valuable, we are happy for the collectors who own them. The first-run card set you bought in June will be the only run made of those cards using the gold border. In future years, it is highly possible that TSR will do some type of promotion or a "Best of" printing of some or all of those cards—but with no gold borders.

What's going to happen in the future? TSR plans to come out every year with a



set of 750 cards. Please feel free to write me whenever you want to suggest things you would like to see in the cards. I have used a lot of suggestions from past letters.

If you haven't seen these collector cards in your stores yet, please ask your hobby store dealer or card dealer for them.

I hope this article has answered many of the questions you've had on the AD&D collector cards. I am unusually pleased with the success of this product and hope you will continue to buy them in the years to come. Thank you once again for supporting TSR with your advice and interest in our products. ☐

### Psychic Errata Revealed!

The following is a collection of errata and clarifications for the AD&D® 2nd Edition volume, PHBR5 *The Complete Psionics Handbook*.

#### Psychokinesis discipline

- The following PK devotions do not require telekinesis as a prerequisite: animate shadow, control light, control sound, molecular agitation, soften. All other PK devotions have telekinesis as a prerequisite (except telekinesis, of course).

#### Telepathy discipline

- Telepathic defense modes (intellect fortress, mental barrier, mind blank, thought shield, tower of iron will) have no prerequisites. All references to prerequisites for these powers should be deleted. A character does not need access to the telepathy discipline to learn defense modes.
- The mindlink power is not a prerequisite for the following telepathic devotions: empathy, ESP, identity penetration, incarnation awareness, psychic impersonation, send thoughts. Mindlink has never been a prerequisite for the following powers: ejection, conceal thoughts, contact, life detection, mind bar,

psionic blast, psychic messenger. Mindlink is a prerequisite for all other telepathic powers.

- Psychic crush should be a devotion. Psionic blast should be a science.
- All references to the "telepathy" power or prerequisite should be changed to the mindlink power instead.
- On page 75, the heading for the fate link power is missing.
- Ego whip and mind thrust both require contact as a prerequisite.

#### Psionic monster listings

- Brain mole:** References to the "amplification" power should be changed to the psychic drain power. Also, mind thrust is a telepathic power, not a metapsionic power.
- Intellect devourer:** References to the "amplification" power should be changed to the psychic drain power. Also, the ectoplasmic form power should be listed as a devotion, not as a science.



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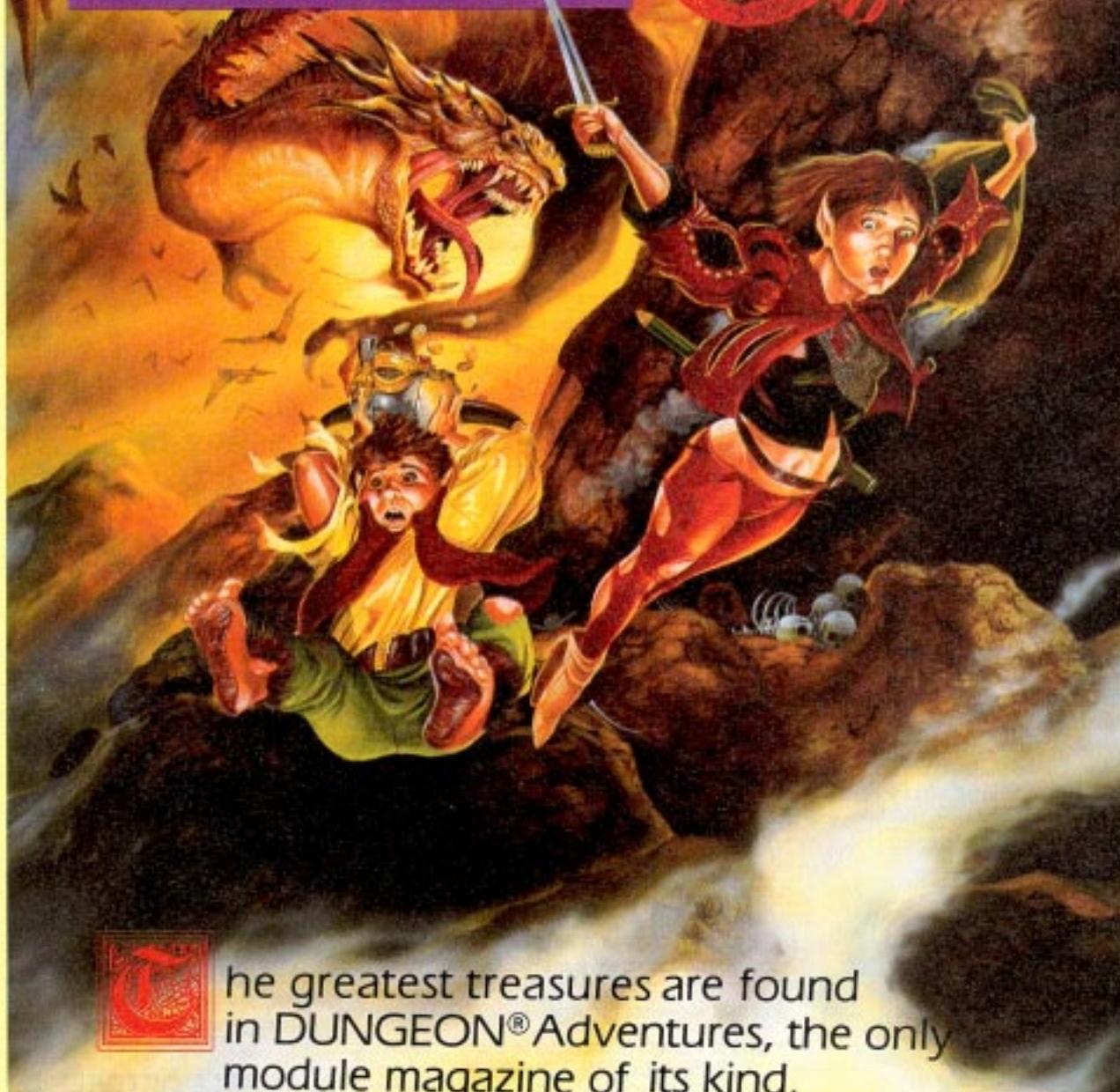
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# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 21: The Savage Baronies

by Bruce A. Heard

*This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphantian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.*

From the Journals of  
**PRINCE HALDEMAR OF HAAKEN**  
Lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire  
Captain of the Ever-Victorious  
PRINCESS ARK  
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

**Eimir 7, AY 2000—Raman, from a later account:** After many hours of study, I came to the end of a large, black, leather-bound tome on the origins of Hule. It had unveiled many ties between the incredible age of the Hulean hero of leg end, Hosadus, and the discovery of cinnabar. Perhaps his inhuman age was no holy gift, but rather the result of cinnabar usage. The so-called Immortal's favor could have been a lie as well. But then, there was still no clue as to Hosadus's ultimate fate, nor any apparent link with today's Master of Hule. It could be, too, that Hosadus had become undead.

A loud, cavernous snore pulled me from

my thoughts. It was Nyanga. He had escorted me to this library in a town called Porto Preto, a nest of sea-going riff-raff. His Highness the admiral had judged the place somewhat risqué for the likes of me, and he had ordered me to rub red makeup over my face and hands before landing. The admiral also gave me several coins of the shiny pink metal from Slagovich, just in case. Fortunately, the majority of the population was of distant Yavdlom descent—not that they were as well educated and well behaved as their mighty southern cousins, mind you. Anyhow, Nyanga fit in very well.

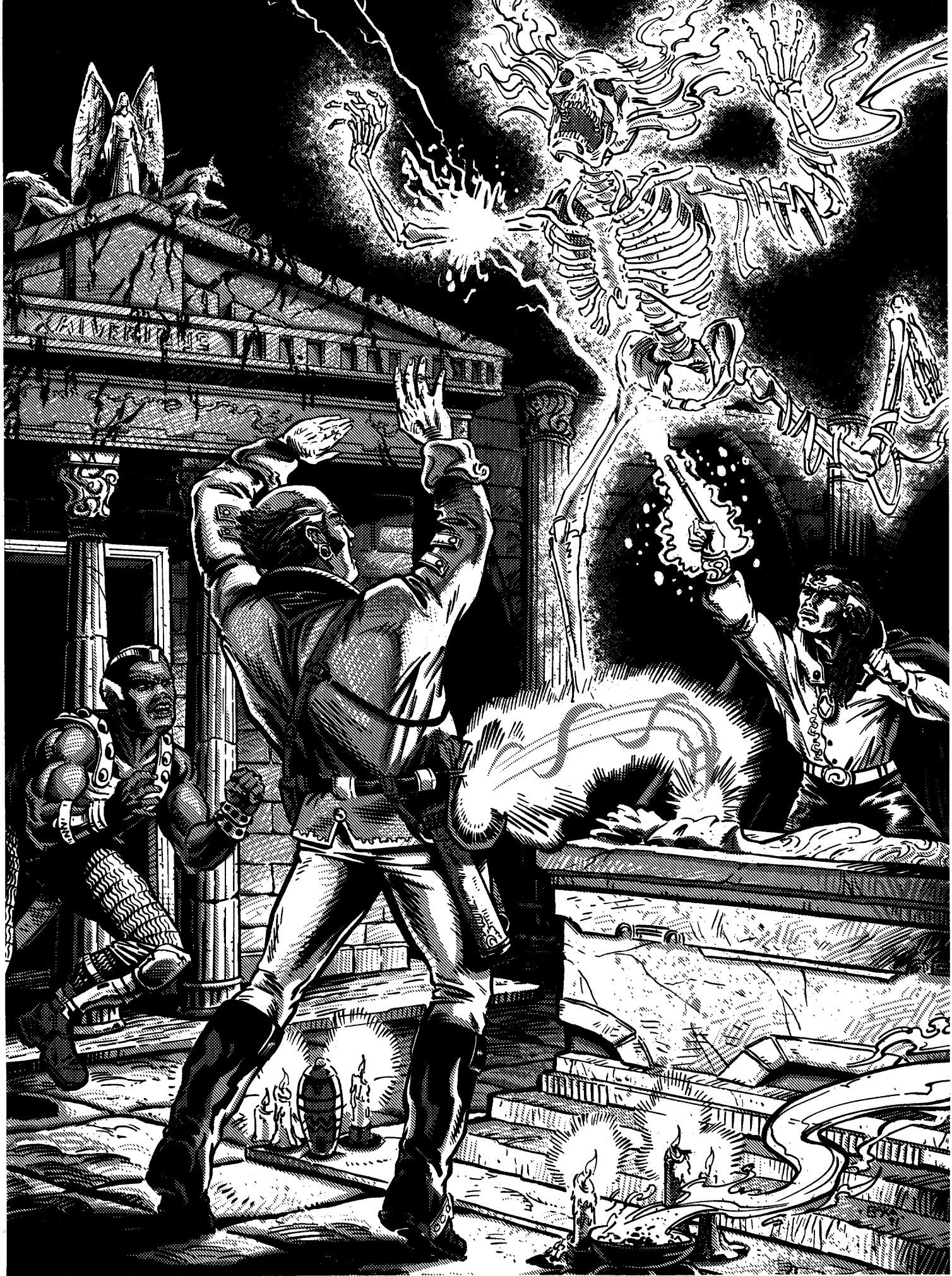
Porto Preto's library qualified more as a grossly mismanaged bric-a-brac of literature, probably booty plundered from hapless merchantmen. Indeed, there were volumes of material foreign from this rugged barony. Of course, this was obviously of no interest to Nyanga.

I was turning back to my studies when I noticed a small, slimy, and nasty looking creature crawling up Nyanga's leg. It looked like a tiny red man, gnarled and warty, perhaps some evil mandragora. Then I noticed one on Nyanga's shoulder, sucking at his jugular vein, and yet another two examining the contents of his pouch. I could not help gasping at the sight.

Nyanga woke up. The man-things trotted away with his pouch, chittering and giggling. The tall black man jumped to his feet and ran after them. With horror, I saw him swing his giant sword at the little creatures, wildly slashing though stacks of moldy scrolls and carelessly crushing tables, shelves, and other furniture. Soon, Nyanga ran down the stairs, cursing and roaring at his tiny tormentors.

Damp, stuffy, and dark, this remote crypt of the library was no reassuring place. A chill ran down my spine at the thought of staying here alone. I lit another three candles to chase away any suspicious shadow and evil spirits. That's when





Artwork by Thomas Baxa

I saw her: a frail maiden with a pale white face, long black hair with pearls, and a sad look in her eyes. Her beauty almost made me forget she was not of this world, for I could still see rows of books through her translucent body. I dropped my candelabrum in surprise, but she raised her hands in a gesture of friendship,

"Fear not, noble sage. I wish you no harm. Please listen to my plight, for I have sought eternal rest so long."

I could not take my eyes off the ghostly maiden. I was too shocked to answer. "You bear the key to my freedom," she went on. "I beg you to help me end my torment."

After further conversation, I learned that she was referring to the pink coins with which the admiral had entrusted me. That seemed like very little wealth to offer in exchange for such a deed as freeing her, but she was adamant. "I am fading away into limbo," she whispered at last, "but only you can save me. Come at the Tower of Mercy and seek my grave at the chapel. Please come. On my knees, I implore you." She then vanished into the dark.

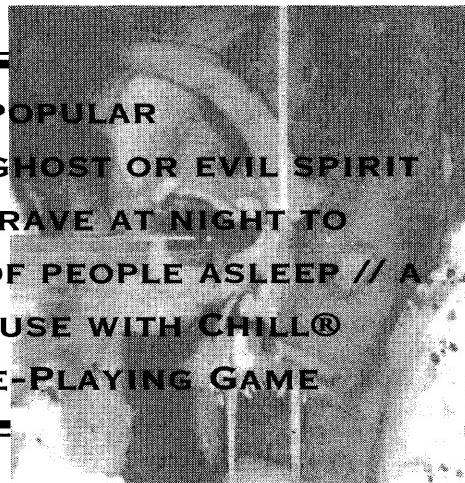
My heart was pounding in my chest. Her words echoed endlessly in my mind. I had to free my own self from an overbearing sense of grief and guilt. I had no choice but leave at once on a quest to save the maiden in distress. How quaint.

**Eimir 8—Haldemar:** Nyanga and Raman had been missing most of the night until the warrior appeared, alone, just before sunrise. His report to me: "De sage be readin' all day when de little mohn steal me pouch. Eh mohn, I say, give back me pouch. He run away! I be catchin' de little mohn, and then—poof—he go away! Tis' evil magic, mohn. Someone play de trick illusion to keep me away. When I be back, ye sage be gone. I be searchin' de crypt, I be searchin' de street. He be nowhere, mohn."

It could be that Raman had been kidnapped. But why? Perhaps this wasn't such a good idea giving him these coins. I was tempted to use the crystal ball to locate Raman, but he was wearing common garb, not his uniform robes. I could not recall any familiar object that the crystal ball could focus on. In addition to this, Xerdon was showing no sign of improvement from his strange illness, I left Talasar in charge of the *Princess Ark* and left with Nyanga to investigate Raman's disappearance.

**Eimir 8—Raman, from a later account:** It took most of this day to locate the Tower of Mercy. I learned from three drunken miners at a tavern that it stood on the northern border, on the trail north of Porto Preto. It was a fortified guard post, the last civilized spot before the Red Lands. Beyond it lay a desert filled with monsters, but also a haven for miners. In the evening, the three drunkards were to leave toward their promised land. Posing as a poet in search of inspiration, I decided to ride with them up to the tower on one of their shabby mules.

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**Eimir 9—Talasar, from a later account:** A band of thieves triggered the ship's magical wards last night, several hours after the admiral's departure. They left promptly as the crew investigated, but not before causing great harm to Xerdon. Somehow, they managed to enter sick bay and stab Xerdon several times in his sleep, nearly killing him. By chance, they did not slit his throat altogether. With Razud's will, I healed the Chief of the Guard.

Although still weak from his unknown illness, Xerdon mentioned a pendant he had that the thieves ripped away. It did not seem to have much value at all, though. It was a small net in which he used to keep small objects. It held a piece of red metal he found in the mine under Slagovich. I examined his chest, and I noticed a small red patch on his skin where the rock had rubbed. The thieves took nothing else, except a few items of little value and some petty cash.

The rest of the day was uneventful until later in the evening. I caught Ramissur preparing to leave on one of the lifeboats without permission. He was drunk. He seemed somewhat embarrassed and admitted he had decided to seek out the chief's assailants and settle accounts with them. Although I would not condone his inebriated state or his intended use of violence as a way of gaining retribution, I authorized him to go on. I needed to find out why thieves wanted that piece of ore and how they managed to learn about its existence and the location of the *Princess Ark*. As tempted as I was to join him, I was the last able officer on board and thus had to remain. One condition for Ramissur's nocturnal escapade was that he was entirely on his own, and that he had to return before the end of the next day. Otherwise, I would be obligated to condemn him for his lack of discipline.

**Eimir 9—Haldemar:** In the evening, after a day of scouring the city without success, we returned to the library. At the sight of Nyanga, the old shrew who kept the library went into a frenzy. A crowd of shady-looking fellows came out to observe the scene. The screeching librarian demanded payment for the damage Nyanga

had inflicted. There was no point in further discussion, as we had other business to attend. I stared at Nyanga.

Reluctantly, he pulled out his pouch and tossed a coin at the howling hag. She stopped. She pondered. And shook her head.

There went another coin. Nope.

There went more, followed soon by the whole pouch. To no avail.

This should have covered whatever damage had been done to the shabby establishment. The crowd grew a bit restless. So there went my pouch too. But the truculent termagant then pointed at my cloak and my boots. Now *that* was enough! I nodded at an already fuming Nyanga, who dove head first into the vociferous crowd. The cantankerous crone jumped savagely on his back while I shot a few warning *lightning bolts*. The mob vanished, leaving the annoying nag before Nyanga's humming blade.

It's amazing how fast she spoke—and for free, too. It seemed our lad Raman had been seen with miners heading north toward the desert. Why? She couldn't tell. But perhaps we could catch up. We soon bought two fast steeds and galloped up the miners' trail.

**Eimir 10—Ramissur from a later account:** Upon my arrival in Porto Preto, I went to one of the shadier taverns in the older part of the town. After some preparation, I found the identity of a notorious band of thieves in the town and their habitual hangout. There, feigning to be drunk, I spread noises about some shiny metal I planned on stealing. It wasn't long before someone whispered me to come in the back street.

Five hooded people were waiting there. I posed as a deserter seeking revenge and wealth. I told them I had been in charge of security in a ship that had just been raided. In response to my failure to prevent an officer from being severely wounded, the ship's commander stripped me of my rank. I said I knew how to get past the ship's magical wards and how to reach the chest holding the precious metal. But I needed help in exchange for a fair share of the booty. Of course, for my own life's sake I

wouldn't reveal anything more.

They said they would consider the idea and contact me later. I stayed at a tavern called O Valhacoito [The Cutthroat]. One of the men came back later and said his leader was interested. I was led to a crypt inside an abandoned family tomb in the cemetery, where six people were waiting. In colorful language, the leader asked, "Eh, meu bom [my good man], what tells me this is not a trap?" As I considered clobbering the happy bunch myself, soldiers burst in, to my astonishment—and to everyone else's, as well. In the brief melee that followed, the soldiers slaughtered every one in the gang, except one—a stoolie. The troops held me at sword point.

With an excited grin, the stoolie pointed to me and said, "He's the one, *Senhor Capitão*. He said they still have the ore on board." The captain nodded and turned to his men, pointing at the stoolie. "Get him, too," he said. The soldiers brutally knocked out the screaming stoolie. We were both put in chains and promptly taken to the baron's keep by wagon. An hour later, my fiendish companion woke up beside me in the baron's dungeon. The place was poorly maintained, and I discovered that the mortar was crumbling where our chains were secured to the walls. We made a deal: If I could break the shackles, he would pick the locks to the dungeon doors. Although I could not trust him, there was little else to do.

After considerable exertion on my part, the shackles gave and soon I pulled the stoolie free. It was only after a copious thrashing from me that he recovered his nerve and endeavored to defeat the heavy grate's lock. After sneaking about the dungeon, we came to an exit. Two people stood on the stairs there, unaware we had escaped. The baron was there, speaking with a man with a slight Hulean accent. There I learned that an old acquaintance was still interested in our ship and crew. The man said The Master desired that I be put to the sword, and the *Princess Ark* captured at once. The Master's spies had failed to seize any cinnabryl during the raid they had conducted on the ship. The Master wanted only the crew, especially the officers, and would pay a generous ransom for them. The ship could remain in Porto Preto. The man added he could help the baron's soldiers reach the ship.

That's when the stoolie started acting up again. He leaped forward and dropped to his knees before the astounded men. "Vossa Alteza [Your Highness], I beg your mercy! The foreigner forced me to come with him. Let me serve you better, *Senhor Barão* [Sir Baron]." Fearing an attack, the two men ran away, calling for the guard. I took great pleasure at the sound of the stoolie's bones cracking when I got hold of his neck. I ran down a hallway and jumped through a massive stained glass window, the only exit. By chance, I landed in the keep's front court, under a pouring rain. I knocked a guard down and stole his

horse, just barely making it past the portcullis. At last I retrieved the lifeboat and returned to the *Princess Ark*—without the stolen ore, alas, but with vital information.

**Eimir 10—Haldemar:** A thunder-storm had been plaguing us all day. It worsened when we reached the tower, on top of a high plateau. It was close to midnight then. The muddy trail was very steep in many places, and darkness made our task of following it rather perilous.

The guards at the tower were rather apathetic. When questioned, they vaguely pointed toward an abandoned monastery at the edge of a forest. We found Raman there, sitting inside a dusty crypt. Disappointed and confused, he was biding his time tossing small rocks into a broken urn. He was startled and ashamed when he saw us, but perhaps relieved as well.

"Forgive me, Your Highness," he said, red faced. "I don't know what's become of me. I felt compelled to come here at once after an encounter with a ghost in that library in Porto Preto. So eager was I to go that I omitted to leave proper notice. But perhaps the ghost was just part of a vivid dream I had, for I have waited here a whole day to no use."

As we prepared to leave, a form suddenly materialized above a tomb. It was the maiden of Raman's description. She stared at us, then motioned Raman to come. She was indeed fascinating, but something inside me cried foul play. Suddenly I snapped out of the trace. "Raman!" I shouted. "Back off, man!"

I was too late. An ark of crimson light fused the air between Raman's pouch and the grave. It sizzled and crackled . . . and it fizzled out.

The ghost wailed. Obviously in pain, she transformed herself into a ghastly, translucent red skeleton. This monstrosity then leaped at Raman and tore at him. A lightning bolt from my wand seemed to burn through her ectoplasmic matter, causing her to shrivel somewhat. Nyanga charged forward and, with a mighty swing of his deadly magical blade, hacked the fearsome apparition into spectral smithereens.

Raman felt weak. The pink metal in his pouch was gone. "Why, why?" he babbled in tears. Nyanga pried the stone grave open. "Tis an evil spirit, mohn," he said curtly. "Only de powers of darkness know why it be wantin' ye soul. Open fire be de way of killin' de evil spirit!" He tossed a flask of oil into the foul sepulcher and set it ablaze.

I then cast a *travel* spell back to the ship. We arrived hours after Ramissur's return and found the crew at their battle stations. Talasar warned us of a potential attack from the Vilaverdan army. Indeed, a small flying skiff approached, its lantern flickering in the nocturnal sky. It made directly for the *Princess Ark*, despite the fact that our ship was invisible at that moment.

The baron's captain of the guard soon stood at the prow and hailed us. "*Senhor Capitão da Princesa!* This is an official

visitation! You are transporting illegal metals. We request you turn your ship visible and allow immediate permission to come aboard!" He could obviously see us. I restored visibility to the ship's hull and acceded to the captain's demand.

He carried a small animal with him, like a fat ferret. He dropped it on the deck and it scurried away, sniffing and snorting, while he asked probing questions about our mission and itinerary. The creature came back later, whining and hissing. It had found nothing. The baron must have been after the pink metal from Slagovich. There was none left now. Perhaps that ghost had been of some use after all!

"It seems everything is in order. My apologies, *Senhor Capitão*. But you are requested to keep you ship visible at all times when visiting Vilaverde. *Muito Obrigado, Senhor* [Much obliged, sir]." The captain of the guard picked up his little beast and left. Whatever were the plans the baron of Vilaverde had concocted, they had just failed. He had probably hoped to delay our departure. Worse, perhaps he had expected to demand the ship be impounded and moored at a common dock. At least I presumed so, since I could not see any threatening force nearby. But there was no point in remaining in such a dangerous place any longer. The baron must have had a secret up his sleeve.

I ordered an immediate departure, full speed ahead. Already the morning wind filled the sails, and the *Princess Ark* veered on a southwesterly course. In the rising sun, I looked down and saw that dozens of powerful ballistae dotted the farmland below. They had been rigged with ropes and large grappling hooks, some still aimed at the *Princess*'s previous position. They must have been pulled into position during the stormy night. Fortunately, the mud had delayed them long enough to allow for our departure. I could see crowds of soldiers and their baggage train slowly heading back toward Porto Preto. Indeed, we had just escaped another treachery.

**To be continued...**

## Errant soul \*

Armor Class:	2
Hit Dice:	6 * * * (see text)
Move:	150' (50')
Flying:	300' (100')
Attacks:	1 touch or spell
Damage:	Weakness, or by spell
No. Appearing:	1 (1)
Save As:	F6 or better (see text)
Morale:	11
measure Type:	E
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	950; 1,650; 2,300; etc

The errant soul appears as a faint skeletal silhouette inside a translucent red specter, its eyes no more than gaping pools

of darkness. It can appear as a less fearsome ghostlike person if it wishes. It is an undead that rose from the remains of a being who was once powerful through the use of cinnabryl. The original being aged beyond its natural life span, then died when it ran out of cinnabryl or when the cinnabar poison subsided from its body. The chances of an errant soul forming are equal to 1% per century of the being's final age at the time of his death. For example, a 350-year-old creature dying of one of these two causes has a 3% chance of becoming an errant soul. This presumes the original body is intact and left in a crypt or another secure area where it becomes a dry, mummified husk. The errant soul rises on the 10th day after the being's death.

An errant soul typically has 5 HD, plus one per century of the original being's age at the time of its death. In the example given above, the errant soul would have 8 HD and save as an 8th-level fighter. It retains the memory and personality of the original being, but it has an uncontrollable desire to find cinnabryl. It does not have any of its previous life's spell-casting abilities, other than those described herein.

The errant soul's only attack form consists of a *grasp of weakening*. On a successful to-hit roll, it causes its victim to temporarily lose a point of Strength (no save). At Strength zero, the victim passes out and dies. Lost Strength is recovered after a full night's sleep. The errant soul can be hit only by magical weapons. If the mummified body is ever destroyed, the vengeful errant soul will forever stalk the culprits until they are dead or until it itself is destroyed. A successful *raise dead* spell cast on the monster will destroy it forever, as well as a "D" result on the Cleric Turning Undead Table. If it does gain revenge, it returns to the old grave and haunts it forever (or until destroyed). An errant soul can be turned as a specter. Like all undead, it is immune to sleep, charm, and *hold* spells.

The errant soul lurks in the dark, avoiding contact with crowds or bright lights. It must save vs. spells each round it is in presence of two or more living creatures, or if caught in sunlight or within a *light* spell's area of effect. It vanishes if it fails its saving throw, is turned by a cleric, is defeated in combat by means that failed to destroy it permanently, or so wishes. It rematerializes 1-4 days later at midnight, near the old grave.

Characters killed by an errant soul rise from their bodies 1-4 days later as common wraiths. They travel back to the errant soul's old grave during night hours and seek to guard it in the errant soul's absence. They attack anyone approaching without cinnabryl. There is a 50% chance of finding 1-4 wraiths guarding an errant soul's old grave.

The errant soul is attracted to cinnabryl and can accurately sense its location within 24 miles. It seeks to have cinnabryl

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brought to its parent body, since the errant soul is immaterial and thus could not carry it. The errant soul has the ability to cast a *phantasmal force* once a day, which it uses to isolate a victim. It also can *charm* a victim once a day and persuade him to carry the metal back to the dead body. If brought within 10' of the dead body, the metal is instantly depleted at the rate of 100 Ci per hit die of the errant soul. If there was enough cinnabryl to account for all of the undead's hit dice, the errant soul and the mummified body are exorcised and permanently destroyed. If not, the errant soul becomes enraged and seeks to kill the bearer of the cinnabryl. The errant soul is an intelligent being that uses its *charm* ability to gain information on people or treasures, or in order to meet any goal it has given itself. If the *charm* fails, it may attempt to parley, depending on the situation.

### The Savage Baronies

Southwest of the Great Hule lie a number of loosely organized realms. These are known as the Savage Baronies because none of their monarchs qualify as a true king. The rulers are essentially the descendants of families of explorers who established their colonial domains centuries ago. Most of these rulers call themselves barons, and they wield almost supreme power over their lands.

The four nations closest to Hule in the Gulf region are the Dominion of Vilaverde, the State of Texeiras, and the Baronies of Narvaez and Torreón. The Red Lands—flatlands of cracked, sun-baked mud—separate these baronies from the Great Hule. Although the Red Lands are culturally claimed by Texeirans and Vilaverdans (hence the Red Lands' original name of *Terra Vermelha* [Red Lands]), they are a region of fierce political rivalry. The lands harbor small, scattered deposits of cinnabar. Although no deposit lasts long enough to provide its owners with any significant advantage, the cinnabar is nevertheless the object of ferocious competition among Torreón, Texeiras, Vilaverde, and Hule.

These four nations signed the historic

Treaty of Tampicos, in which it was agreed that the first nation to raise its flag above a desired mining site gains the right to operate a mine there. This requires that a messenger bring the news to his ruler, then return with an official delegate and a mining writ. This is the most dangerous part, since rivals might slaughter the envoys so their own flags can be raised first. Many spies travel this parched land for that sole purpose. More than once have armies clashed over a treacherous ambush or a falsified writ. There are presently two mines in "official" operation, both under Vilaverdan control.

The Red Lands also are the homeland of brigands, humanoids, and foul monsters. For an outrageous fee, some of these inhabitants may work for one of the four nations. Their loyalty, however, is very short lived, since it is often based on who pays the best. Most of the Red Lands natives are dangerous raiders who prey on border villages, miners, and caravans.

Capsule descriptions of each of these nations follow. (Clever DMs will note that Vilaverde and Texeiras were inspired by Portugal during the 1500s and 1600s. Torreón is based on conquistador-era Spain, and Narvaez is based on Spain during the Inquisition period.)

**Vilaverde—capital:** Porto Preto (pop. 14,000, distantly related to the Yavdlom); ruler: Barão Jorge "O Temerário" de Vilaverde; typical NPC: boisterous, swashbuckling fighter.

Porto Preto, a notorious pirate haven, is the home port of a large fleet of armed merchant ships. As with all other towns in this region, it is heavily defended. Tiny hamlets with fortified keeps dot the domain of Vilaverde. Vilaverdans, like Texeirans, are famous for their adventurers, explorers, thieves, pirates, and whalers. Feared on all seas, they are a light-hearted, high-spirited people who often show a legendary audacity.

Baron Jorge "The Intrepid" actually owns many colonial holdings. These are no more than small forts or fortified villages used for commerce and navigation, spread out on the coast of Davania and further west on the Savage Coast. Vi-



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laverde and Texeiras are rivals who virtually control the Gulf of Hule's western half. They often clash with the aggressive eastern city states.

Vilaverde's biggest challenge remains the defense of his eastern border with the Great Hule. Aside from the Red Lands, his barony offers the only barrier to Hulean expansion into the Savage Coast. The Vilaverdan fleet could easily ruin all of the Hulean naval and coastal assets, which is why Hule is reluctant to muscle into this territory.

Texeiras—capital: Boa Mansão (pop.: 9,500); ruler: Barão Bartolomeu "O Calvo" de Texeiras; typical NPC: chic, adventuring thief.

The capital of Boa Mansão is a merchant center. Much of the merchandise brought in the region, including very secret loads of cinnabar, pass through this city. Business is generally good with the Barony of Narvaez, which often relies on Texeiras for its supplies of cinnabar.

Baron Bart "The Bald" is, however, in a difficult position because he must maintain his borders with four powerful neighbors. All of them covet his rich capital, his fleets, and his colonial holdings. The barony's overall population and land forces remain rather light in comparison with its neighbors. So far, diplomacy, bribery, and skillful political manipulation and assassinations have kept the status quo.

Torreón—capital: Ciudad de Leon (pop.: 12,200, eleven majority); ruler: Baronesa Isabel "La Terrible" de Torreón y Morales; typical NPC: proud, witty swordmaster.

This land-locked barony is notorious for its poverty. Doña Isabel's great plan is to build up an army of conquistadors and eventually take over Texeiras and the Red Lands. This policy has wrecked the local economy through excessive taxes. To date, most of Doña Isabel's troops have been needed to garrison the outer limits of her territory against brigands or humanoid raids. The remainder of the troops is used to enforce that taking of unpopular taxes among the population. Torreón presently is in the best position to overrun the Red Lands' native inhabitants and seize its wealth of cinnabar.

The people of Torreón and Narvaez are renown for their ability as fine warriors. They are the brave and passionate type: hot tempered, proud, and quick to cross rapiers at the least offense. Generations of tough and ruthless soldiers, raised from the hardship of the borderlands, have hailed from these lands. Torreóners often seek employment elsewhere as professional mercenaries, including as marines aboard Texeiran ships. Ciudad de Leon harbors a famous Guild of Swordmakers whose red steel is the best, a prized item for any swordsman throughout the Savage Coast.

Narvaez—capital: Puerto Morillos (pop.: 23,000); ruler: Baron Hugo "El Despiadado" de Narvaez y Montoya; typical NPC: devout and inflexible cleric.

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This large barony is the only state that hasn't ratified the Treaty of Tampicos. It has no common border with the Red Lands and thus cannot directly compete with its neighbors. Fertile Narvaez is reduced to trading food for cinnabar with any of its neighbors, usually Texeiras. Excess trading has occasionally provoked famine and peasant revolts.

Baron Hugo "The Merciless" spends much of whatever wealth remains to build a better war fleet. His goal is to break the Texeiran and Vilaverdan hegemony over the seas. Although this is a large barony with a higher population than its three neighbors, its people suffer from excessive taxation and a brutal rulership.

The powerful here, like the poor, remain profoundly pious followers of their Immortal Patrons. Knights commonly go on quixotic quests to retrieve holy artifacts or bring the good word to faraway natives (with the help of their mighty swords). One such "recovered" artifact lies at the Grande Catedral de Ciudad Quimeras, a heavily fortified spot of constant pilgrimage in the region. Immortal philosophy is taken excessively seriously in Narvaez, to the point that anyone suspected of the least heresy risks prompt imprisonment, ruthless "questioning," and merciless execution at the burning stake. Magic-users, elves, and druids should beware.

### Letters

I must inquire regarding the context of issue #170's visit to the Serpent Peninsula. The population and state of "Thanopolis" appears at odds with that described in module X6 Quagmire. Presumably the events depicted in that module pre-date or post-date the contemporary period of AC 1,000 of the Gazetteers and the Voyage of the Princess Ark.

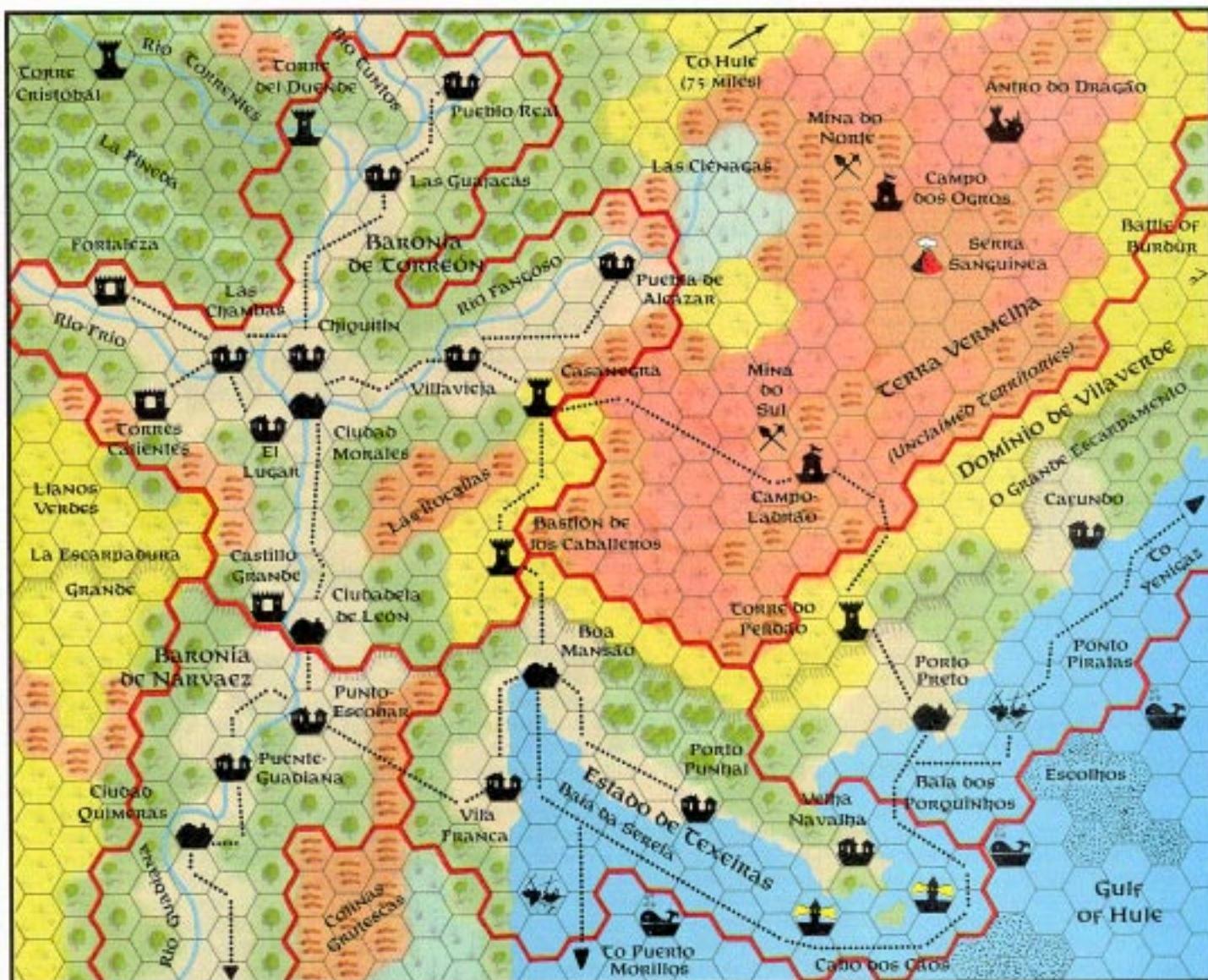
You are right: I deliberately took liberties with the original settings. In researching that region and what obviously lay to the west (Hule and the Savage Coast), it quickly became clear that there was very little of interest there. I didn't think anyone would be particularly fascinated by thousands of miles of swamp, desert, and fea-

tureless plains with nobody around! I made these changes in order to liven the place up, and so mercilessly grafted on geographical features and local cultures. At this point, it would be safe to assume all these older modules took place at an earlier period in time. I hope that by now you are no longer playing the characters from these modules (which are now out of print). If you do use those PCs and desire to use the information presented here, perhaps it is time to perform (gasp!) a reality shift. Again, don't forget that the material presented here is only suggested. Please tell me if you want more of this stuff.

I was slightly disappointed by the latest D&D module DDa3 Eye of Traldar. I had hoped that a greater description of the Black Eagle Barony and Fort Doom would have been given. However, I suspect that this would have overloaded what was intended as a Basic-level module. Is such detail being reserved for at least an Expert-level module? I am sure, however, that the forthcoming HWR series and GAZ14 will satisfy my thirst for more background on parts of the D&D game world.

Bingo! Aiming the module at novice gamers was indeed what affected DDa3. Please note that, for simplicity's sake, the new D&D boxed game deals exclusively with dungeons and does not mention anything of the Known World. This is why we could not expand on the subject of the Black Eagle Barony DDa4 The Dymrak Dread (available in December 1991) will be affected likewise. DDa4 will work better as a novice module than DDa3, but it is not the kind of product that experienced gamers should look in to for background information on the world.

This brings up a more important issue. (I can already hear some grumbling out there.) Please understand that the more new gamers these types of products are able to bring in, the more likely we will later be able to increase the number of products that are so dear to you. There is going to be a lot of support for the new D&D boxed game within the next year. We



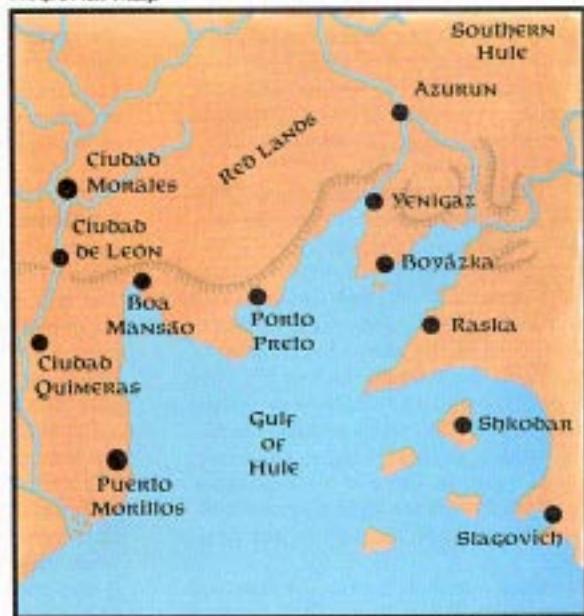
Scale: one hex equals 8 miles

Village
Large Town
Keep
Fort
Camp
Light House
Ship Wreck
Whaling
Reefs
Rocky Desert
Battlefield
Trail or Shipping Lane
Ruins

Salt Mines
Volcano
Borber
Light Forest
Heavy Forest
Forested Hills
Rocky Hills
Badlands
Bog
Plateau
Grasslands
River
Farmland



Regional Map



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Cartography by Dennis Kauth

think that this is in both the D&D game's and its loyal fans' best interests in the long run.

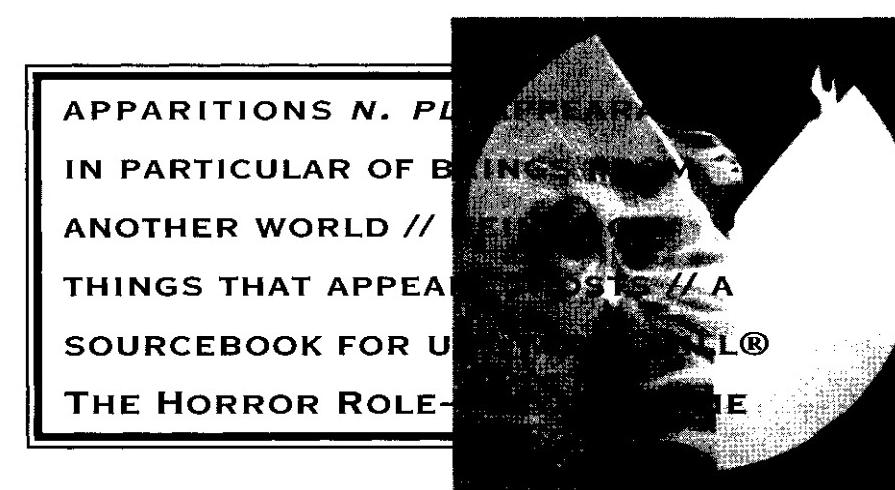
If you're not sure which products support the new D&D boxed game, simply look on the front cover for a special icon. Those that come with an icon deal with the D&D boxed game and are referred to as "Entry Level" products. If they do not show an icon, they are for use with the Rules Cyclopedia, the Known World, and the HOLLOW WORLD™ set, as you now know them. These are referred to as "Champion Level" products. Starting with DDa4, a dragon icon indicates an adventure module; a sword-and-shield icon denotes a common supplement; a scroll (like on the side of the D&D boxed set) designates rules; and, finally, a castle indicates a special accessory containing 3-D material or special components.

The main problem that I have with a number of Gazetteers is that they do not always provide clear numbers for what the local armed forces are. For example, a good job was done with *The Golden Khan of Ethengar*, *The Republic of Darokin*, and *The Principalities of Glantri*; however, the same cannot be said about *The Emirates of Ylaruam*, *The Northern Reaches*, *Dawn of the Emperors*, and a number of others. Especially for the latter, whose empires always seem on the verge of a clash, this type of omission is surprising. Other Gazetteers provide vague or conflicting information on military statistics. It would be good if you could provide this type of information, as well as notes on how the numbers break down among land, naval, aerial, or other types of military forces.

Good point. The different styles of the many authors who contributed to the Gazetteers conflicted at times with the "Gazetteer mold." Some of these accessories indeed missed military-related information but may have fared better in other respects. Sometimes, choices must be made as to what best fits a product and the talent of its author. What may be lacking in unerring consistency can often be gained in the variety of approaches and styles. Some of the information you seek can be found in a chart at the bottom of TM2 The Eastern Trail Map, but it will not solve your problem entirely. It is not out of the question, however, for a complete and detailed list of military forces to see print in 1992. More later on this.

Speaking of air fleets and treacherous Thyatians, why do pegasi, rocs, and gold dragons still stick around Thyatis? The dragons would have to be paid, even those bred from eggs. No human could possibly tame the older dragons, either, not with their centuries of life spans. The desire for treasures in dragons is indomitable.

The treacherous side of the Thyatians, I would think, remains limited to their nation's higher spheres, such as the government, merchants, and so forth. The



*relationship between a Knight of the Air and a flying mount would be totally different. Imagine the moral and emotional ties that existed between a Roman general and his legions, compared to that between a Caesar or his senators and a common foot soldier. Not the same, I would think.*

*But you are right in pointing out the need for reasons that would keep these creatures in the service of the knights. These reasons might be ones personal to the creatures, or some other powerful binding force. It could be interesting to see how one could use dragons as war mounts, based on what was said in the article, "From Hatchling to Immortal Guardian," in DRAGON® issue #170.*

I found a point of confusion in the piece on "Cinnabryl's darker uses" ("The Voyage of the Princess Ark," DRAGON issue #172) about the number of points of Constitution that can be lost with one single dose of essence of cinnabar. You say first that anytime someone imbibes a dose of essence, one point of Constitution is lost. A few paragraphs later, in the example, you then say that reaching the second degree of contamination causes two points to be lost. Which is true?

*Yes, one dose of essence causes the loss of one Constitution point. To reach the second degree, you would lose another point, for a final total of two points since you started dabbling in cinnabryl use. It is*

*only the amount of depleted cinnabryl that gets multiplied (you would deplete 200 Ci for the second degree, 300 Ci for the third degree, and so forth). Ω*



## LOOKING FOR MORE GAMERS?

You may think you'd have to travel to another planet to find a game convention. Finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem, too. Put your scoutsuit away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you'd think — and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like board-games, role-playing games, miniature wargames, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.

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## Athas: The new world on the block

by James Lowder

The DARK SUN™ novel line begins this month from TSR with the release of *The Verdant Passage*, the first in the five-book Prism Pentad. While this makes the series the new kid on the block in TSR's book department, don't let that fool you. Troy Denning, author of the Prism Pentad, will be doing his best to prove how strong—and dangerous—this world really is.

The *Verdant Passage* tells the story of a revolt in Tyr, a typical city-state on Athas. Three people from wildly different backgrounds are drawn into a plot to overthrow the city's sorcerer-king: Rikus, the man-dwarf (mull gladiator who hopes to win his freedom); Sadira, the sultry sorceress who seeks the most dangerous secrets of magic; and Agis, a maverick statesman who believes himself to be the people's champion, until he encounters the Veiled Alliance.

You'll be surprised by these intriguing characters and the well-developed setting you'll find in the novels, even if you've already picked up the game supplements about Athas. That's one of the goals we've set for the line of game and book products. If you're a gamer, you'll find information in the novels to enhance your understanding of the world, information that won't necessarily be covered in the game releases. If the novels grab your attention first, you'll find that the game supplements are loaded with cool things about Athas, too.

And the DARK SUN world is definitely a surprising place.

### World building

As you might have heard by now, the DARK SUN world originated almost two years ago, when the TSR staff started thinking about new fantasy worlds. With the WORLD OF GREYHAWK®, DRAGONLANCE® and FORGOTTEN REALMS® game worlds still on the market and doing well, we all knew there was no need to create another "standard" fantasy world. To make a long story short, it was decided to exclude everything that could be considered "standard" from the DARK SUN world.

Armed with those simple guidelines, Timothy B. Brown and Troy Denning of the game department, and Mary Kirchoff, managing editor of the book department, held lunchtime brainstorming sessions once a week for a year. The first thing they did was develop a detailed history that proved instrumental in the creation of the DARK SUN world as it exists now.

Unfortunately, we can't say much about this history at present, though it will be revealed in time. In fact, the heroes introduced in *The Verdant Passage* will have their own hands full uncovering the dark secrets of Athas's past.

What we *can* say about the world that 'Roy, Tim, and Mary developed is this: It's easier to list what isn't new about Athas than what is. Psionics are common, but dragons are rarely seen. Magic no longer offers power without a price, since each spell cast drains life force from the world itself. Halflings aren't happy little thieves, but bloodthirsty cannibals. Above all, heroes tend to have short lives. This shouldn't be much of a surprise once you consider the fact that evil sorcerer-kings hold much of the power in the city-states that dot Athas's wastelands. Naturally, they don't much care for would-be heroes.

### A world destroyed

The challenge of exploring this new and unique world in the first DARK SUN novels rests in the capable hands of veteran TSR author Troy Denning.

"As the author of the Prism Pentad, I'm excited by the distinctiveness of the world," Troy notes. "Athas is unlike any fantasy world that TSR has published. It's a very harsh, foreboding place where simple survival is a struggle of epic proportions. I like to think of the DARK SUN world as a sort of cross between a medieval European fantasy land and a postnuclear, *Road Warrior*-type of place. Of course, there are no nuclear bombs on Athas, but the analogy of a magnificent society destroyed by its own foolishness is an appropriate one, I think?"

You might get the idea that Athas is a tough place, and that's exactly right. There are no easy paths to success under the dark sun; more precisely, the road to easy power is often through realms of darkness, since the sorcerer-kings who rule the place are evil. Unlike the Realms or Krynn, Athas has no gods to serve as role-models for would-be heroes.

"In many fantasy novels," Troy adds, "good and evil are abstract camps that

exist before the story begins. The heroes choose to side with 'Good' because they want society to prosper, and the villains are labeled 'Evil' because they don't play by the rules of 'decent' folk. On Athas, there are no such set camps, and the handful of heroes who rise above the struggle for survival must take a look at what is happening to their world and decide for themselves where the best hope for salvation lies. They're the ones who define what is 'Good' and what is 'Evil,' and it's their determination to save themselves and their fellow beings that will ultimately define the morality of Athas."

"If the heroes choose well, the world might become a better place—well, a little better anyway. If they choose poorly, Athas will continue to careen along on its self-destructive course. To me, it is this choice, and the lack of outside guidance in making it, that is the most startling thing about the DARK SUN novels. It gives the heroes an added dimension of nobility that wouldn't exist if they *knew* what they were supposed to do."

### More to come

DARK SUN fiction goes beyond the Prism Pentad. In many game supplements for this world, you'll find DARK SUN short stories. Timothy Brown, the group leader in charge of DARK SUN game products and a member of the original design team, notes that the short stories are tailor-made for the adventures. They are meant to "bring to life some aspect of Athasian life that isn't dealt with in the novels. Each story also serves as a 'flavor piece,' written to set the mood and the tone of the impending game adventure. As such, players and DMs alike can—and should—read the short stories before play."

Be prepared for plenty of surprises in the novels and short stories. The very nature of the DARK SUN world lends itself to twists and turns of plot and character. Often, things are not quite what they seem to be, and Athas is filled with ancient mysteries that can overturn even the most carefully laid plots. In each book of the Prism Pentad, the heroes discover something new that will eventually help them learn the secret of Athas's past—a secret that contains the key to saving the future.

The new kids from Athas are anxious to prove that they're no wimps, and if a few bodies get stacked up along the way well, that's the way things work in the

land of the dark sun.



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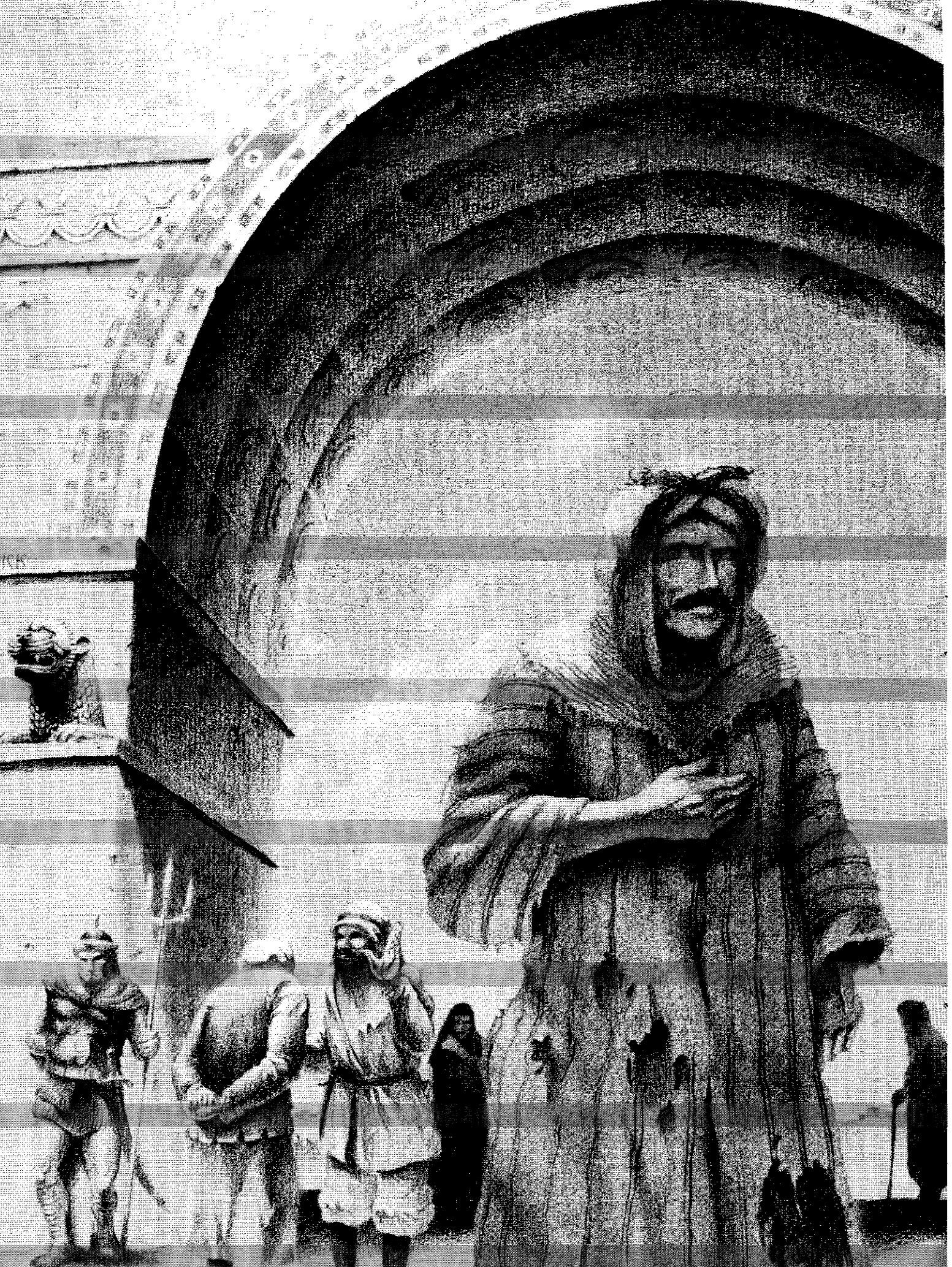


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The guards at the gate are men-mountains. They carry curved steel swords in their belts and they eye all passers through the gates as though they be thief or beggar, which of course many are. Every so often, they stop a cart or wagon and poke tridents or swords into the hay or what-have-you. Sometimes a howling, wounded miscreant bursts forth to be dragged off to the Major of the Guard's torture dungeon. It is a punishable offense for anyone to try to sneak into the city, and this fact is posted out and down the roads away from the gates for those who can read to read.

And I—thief, low-born wanderer, son of a mountain woman and a flatlander soldier, created as I was amidst the smoke and fire of a burning village—walk past the gate guards, ignoring their comments about the shabbiness of my thobe and gutra. I have donned with purpose the head-rag and robe of a pauper. They call attention away from the blue eyes that would mark me instantly as being from other than the city or surrounding desert. Those eyes make me memorable, a thing I do not wish to be.

I am Wahid, pickpocket, master thief. Well, perhaps that is immodest. I am Wahid, cutpurse, burglar, liberator of coin and jewel from the ownership of those too tight to share with the likes of me. I promote charity in the wealthy—the gods look favorably upon those who give generously to the poor (even if involuntarily). No mere gate guard may stand between me and the fat wallets of the city. Still, this is no place for arrogance, and my lowered head offers them the illusion of respect. I pass without being stopped.

Though I have not been here before, I am well acquainted with this city. It was here, two years ago, my brother Ali was executed in the Square of Justice for stealing the purse of a noble. The laws are unforgiving. A hand severed for stealing bread, an arm for stealing a coin. For a purse, a head. Poor Ali; he always was a little dull witted.

I make my way through the fruit bazaar, which is the closest to the gate of all the venues frequented by dwellers-outside-the-city-who-shop-within, which is what I have represented myself to be. I can feel the eyes of one of the gate guards on me as I cross the square. I reach into my thobe and fetch forth a copper, choose a small basket of dates, and pay for it, a move that allows me a sideways glance to see if the guard has indeed followed me beyond the gate. He has but turns away, apparently satisfied as to my intentions.

I melt into the crowds now and allow the movement of the multitude to carry me deeper into the city. Several targets tempt me, but I am after bigger game than small purses of dubious coins carried by ordinaries who have earned them by sweat. No, cutpursing in crowded streets is an open invitation to a beheading, as I pointed out to my late brother no small number of times. How careless these people are, though. It is such a temptation.

My quarry lies beyond the first level of the city, on the street of nobles at city center, on the hill that commands a view of the entire wall and all who dwell within. My target is a merchant, an owner of caravans, a dealer of spice and

# The Blue-Eyed Thief

By Bob Liddil

*Illustrations by Robert Klasnich*

a lover of precious things. It is for these precious things that I have traveled far and risked much.

The sun crosses the sky and stretches the shadows in different directions as I make my way through the streets, working inward at increasing risk of discovery. Now, the shabbiness of my clothing works against rather than for me, calling attention to who I am in relation to where I am. I cannot allow myself to become too noticeable, and so I duck into an alley. I disappear from the main thoroughfare and blend into the deepening shadows. I am close now. There is plenty of time for movement later.

I spot the unlocked cellar door of what looks like a little-used building, and I decide to slip inside. I am safe here. As I close the door above me, I get the feeling that I am indeed safe. I have had a long walk to and into the city, and I shall allow myself the luxury of a brief nap. I must be alert for what I am about after the sun goes down.

A noise awakens me. It is the merest crunch of a footstep on sand, but I am instantly alive and ready. I peer through cracks in the old door, and I see that dark is not quite arrived, but dusk is heavy. I can make out two figures walking in the alley toward me. One is tall, heavily bearded, and wearing the yellow kafiyah of a city marshall. The other is younger, smaller, and his skullcap is red, that of a lawmaker. They are discussing a thing that I cannot quite make out, arguing and joking. Obviously, they are friends.

They are joined unexpectedly and quickly, from out of the shadows, by three armed men: two with short swords, one with a crossbow. It is a robbery. Curse the bad luck that has placed me near it, for I will surely be blamed if I am caught for any other offense related to this part of the city.

The tone of the conversation changes dramatically. The younger man argues with the thieves. This is stupid. If I allow this to go on, someone will surely die—me most likely—or that loudmouth of a lawmaker.

I am no fighter. I depend on stealth and I have never slain anyone. But I burst from my hiding place like the demon itself. Screaming like a madman I rush toward the thieves and their would-be victims as though I were attacking with a force of ten and the strength of twenty.

The one with the crossbow fires his bolt over my head by accident. It worked. I unnerved him. The marshall is well armed and takes advantage of the commotion to draw his blade. Everyone has his hands full. No need for me here. I vacate the alleyway, leaving all to their fate. Precious dark is near, and I am urgently needing to be somewhere else very quickly.

As the sun flees, I make my way through the upper inner avenues that leads to the street of nobles. It is completely dark by the time I reach where I am going. The lights in the great house are gone out and I, master of stealth, creep through the courtyard and enter.

I have shucked my beggar's togs in favor of a thobe and gutra of raven's-wing black. These render me invisible to even the practiced eye. Here there are no eyes watching. There is no guard standing across the door. This merchant believes he is protected by the laws of the city—those laws do not protect him from me. What is his is mine, and I choose freely from among the finest jewels he has. These

rich, they are all the same. They gather hoards of treasure for the taking and then whine when I do. My belly growls. Before I depart, I take some dates and a bit of bread. Then, like a black ghost, I am gone.

The sun is my enemy, but I cannot avoid it. I have discarded the burglar's uniform of the night in favor of less obtrusive attire than that of either thief or beggar. To exit the city requires only that I walk past the gate guards and out onto the outer highway. I must avoid direct eye contact, but at the same time, in this costume, I cannot walk with my head down, for it is not in keeping with whom I pretend to be.

I move casually past the date stand of yesterday, in the fruit bazaar, and stroll purposefully toward the gate. I am pleased to see that today's guards are not the same as yesterday's. That makes things less complicated. My escape is almost complete.

"Hold on, my friend," comes a voice from behind me, a cultured voice. "How have I offended you that you would take leave without saying farewell?"

My voice flees, and with it any answer.

"Surely," he continues, "you will allow me to make amends for my poor hospitality of last evening by offering you a noon meal."

I stare straight ahead. My knees are knocking in fear. The man who speaks is the owner of the house I have robbed. I have his gold and jewels strapped to my body on a belt underneath my robe.

"Do you not see that I wish to make amends for my lack of manners?" he pleads in such a voice that others are beginning to take notice. If I do not act, mine will be a face to remember. I turn with a smile of recognition on my face.

"Of course." I manage to find my voice now. "How thoughtless of me to allow you to bear such guilt. I will accompany you, so that we may come to an understanding by which we may part more amicably."

Together we depart the city gate. Before I can offer protest, he hails a cart-for-hire and we ride the distance in comfort that I covered yesterday with such difficulty. When we arrive, he pays the driver with a single silver coin and, to that worthy's delight, waves off any coppers coming in change. I am ushered, by way of the front door, into that place which I entered by stealth before today's sun. I am trapped and I know it.

I am Wahid, honored house guest. Fifteen days have passed since I entered the home of my host, and he has treated me most elegantly. I have been presented with the most succulent dates, the finest wine, the most aromatic breads that any stolen wealth could have bought. I have witnessed supple dancers, decked in golden bands and jeweled silks, smiling at me through their gyrations. I have shared in the fruits of the very wealth I so freely stole—freely given from the victim to the thief. I am Wahid, not respected by myself.

As many years as I have been walking, I have been a thief. I have stolen for every crumb of bread I have ever eaten. At no time, until now, have I ever seen the face of my victim for more than a split second. Now, I find this merchant to be undeserving of the hatred I have always

felt for his kind. There is no repentance in me for the life I have lived, and yet I find myself crying out for forgiveness. I cry out for an end to this undeserved graciousness.

Who is this Wahid who has removed the belt from his waist that contains his death sentence? He presents the belt to his host.

"I have stolen these things from you," I hear this unknown Wahid say, "and I am sorry that I have done this. At no time in this life have I met anyone who did not serve only himself. But you, I think, possess qualities I desire in myself. I am better for confessing this crime and shall steal no more." So saying, I place my life in his hands, not wishing to continue life as Wahid the thief.

An expert in gold and jewels, as well as spices and silks, I am Wahid the merchant. Fifteen years have passed since I departed the house of my benefactor, he who taught me the art of caravan trading with distant cities. I am widely known for my honesty and my astute sense of bargaining. It is known, but less widely, that my prowess at identifying the value of precious stones was acquired as a thief in my much younger days. Ah, but then, aren't all merchants thieves at heart? We are, if the customer in the marketplace would be believed.

I am not unmindful of my past, and I am not careless concerning my future. That which is the bulk of my fortune is sequestered in a vault under heavy guard, along with the fortunes of many others of my trade. I do, how-

ever, keep many pretty gems and unusual artifacts within my house on the street of nobles.

Last night I was paid a visit by a thief. He was young and he was quiet and he wore the invisible robes of a black cat. He escaped into the night carrying a good treasure, and at this moment he believes he was completely unobserved. I have alerted the guards at the gate by which he will try to leave.

I am standing near the date stand in the fruit bazaar, waiting for him to make his exit from the city. Ah, there he is now. Will he panic and run? Does he have the courage to turn and face me? We shall soon see.

"Hold on, my friend," I hear Wahid the merchant say. "How have I offended you that you take leave without saying farewell?"

He stops. He does not turn around. As I continue to speak familiar words, I can sense the fear pulsing through him. When I fall silent to give him his chance, there is the longest hesitation. Then he turns to face me. He is the first one to have done so in all the time I have followed thieves to this gate.

By the gods. His eyes are blue.

He says, "Of course," and smiles tightly. "How thoughtless of me."

And so closes the circle. Ω

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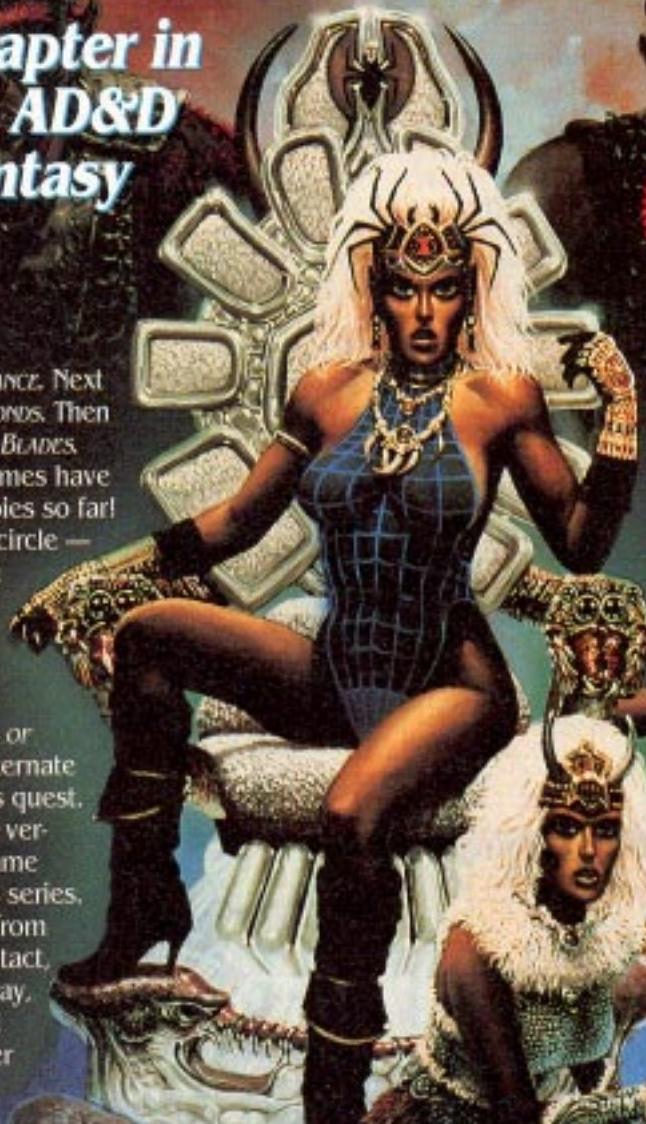
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# Computers

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Quest For Glory II:  
*Trial by Fire*  
(Sierra)

## Take part in a quest for glory

### Reviews

**Quest For Glory II: Trial by Fire** \*\*\*\*\*  
Sierra (209-683-4468)  
PC/MS-DOS version \$59.95

We recently revisited Sierra's home ground in Oakhurst, Calif. Our previous visit was eight years ago on an editorial assignment for *Softalk* magazine. Sierra On-Line, then a fledgling company, housed less than 100 employees. Now it is bursting at the seams with more than 400 personnel, including those in the U.K. and Japan!

The company's dramatic growth in the last couple of years has been fueled through the production of topnotch games, which include the highly awarded King's Quest series by Roberta Williams, *Space Quest*, and *Police Quest*. The company's

acquisition of Dynamix and its blend of adventure, action, and fantasy role-playing offerings makes Sierra one of the leaders in the software entertainment industry.

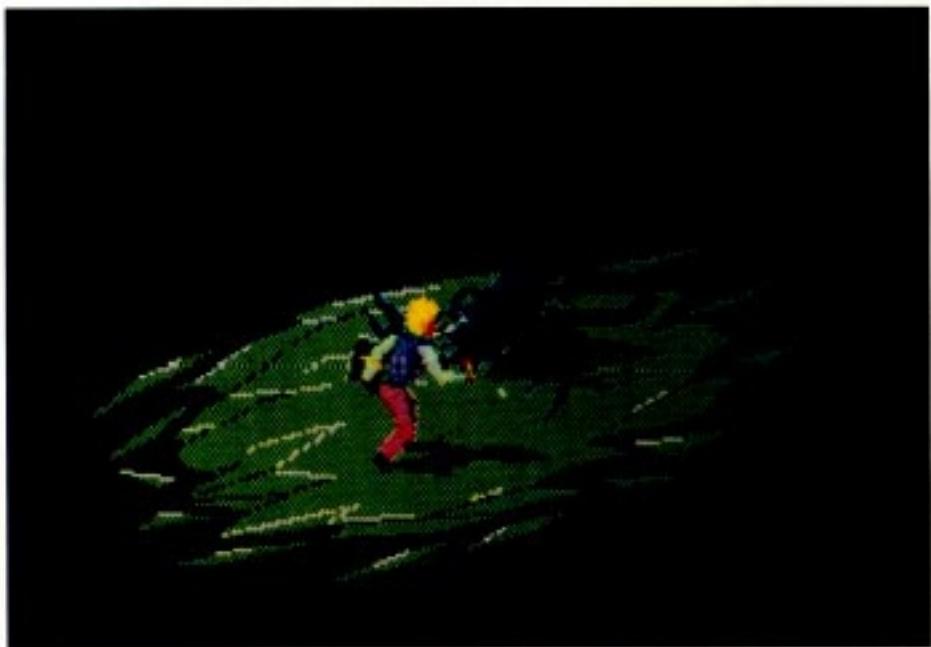
We chatted with the designers of the original *Quest For Glory: So You Want To Be A Hero* (*QFGI*), learning more about the development of the sequel reviewed below, *Quest for Glory II: Trial by Fire* (*QFGII*). Lori and Corey Cole are avid

fantasy role-playing game players, having been involved in FRPGs for over a decade. They tackle game development with a somewhat different perspective than other computer game programmers, and design entertainments that are immediately of liking to gamers. Their games use "practice makes perfect" character progression: The more your character uses his skills, the better he becomes with those skills. However, the truest expression of the way they create a game is that they want the player to "have a good feeling about himself and not have the gamer fight with the computer, but rather have it be his friend," according to Corey.

"There is no passivity in *Quest for Glory II*," said Corey, who has been a programmer for the past 10 years. "Our games involve puzzle solving and character development. We want the player to truly iden-

### Computer games' ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	Superb



Quest For Glory II: *Trial by Fire* (Sierra)



Quest For Glory II: *Trial by Fire* (Sierra)

tify with the character on the screen."

Lori, who writes the screens and the manuals, added, "It's important to have a balanced game. The character should be enabled to surmount an initially perceived impossible challenge and survive. The player feels good about accomplishing this feat."

"We don't want the player to become frustrated," Corey adds. "The DM's play balance is important. In many computer-based role-playing games, certain experience levels aren't attainable except by cheating, and that is discouraging. Too many computer games are really impossible for characters of the first or second level to survive. That doesn't happen with the Quest series."

The third QFG scenario should be out in the summer of 1992, say the Coles. Future trends for FRPG offerings include multimedia and CD-ROM games.

Corey and Lori have an enormous sense of dedication to ensuring their adventures are highly satisfying to the player. They certainly have succeeded with *QFGII*. The only disappointment we have about *QFGII* is that it does not offer VGA graphics. The 16-color EGA display is all you'll get with your VGA board installed. According to the Coles, this is because *QFGII* required

18 months of development; when they started designing the game, EGA was the standard display mode. Few thought VGA would make such a successful incursion into the installed base of PC/MS-DOS computer owners. (They added that *QFGII* is the last EGA game Sierra will release. All future offerings will fully support VGA 256-color.)

*QFGII* will certainly appeal to traditional AD&D® game players. You simply cannot just stand still and wait for an encounter; you must go out and find stuff. If you don't, you won't enjoy the game. It requires that you become the character. Here's a synopsis of the plot:

Back in *QFGI*, you are assumed to have force Baba Yaga from the valley and the town of Spielburg. During that adventure, you made friends with several characters, including the kattas Shema and Shameen (kattas are feline humanoids) and the merchant Abdulla Doo.

Now, it's off on Abdulla's magic carpet to the city of Shapeir, planning on resting your adventure-weary bones. After all, becoming a hero is tough work! Unfortunately, such is not to be. Shapeir is the twin city of Raseir, which lies to the south across a vast desert. Built around katta settlements, the cities are mirror images of each other.

But many thousands of years ago, Iblis, a marid (the most powerful of the magical, shape-changing djinn), decided it was time to turn all mankind into slaves. He built a mammoth city in the desert, now known as the Forbidden City, and tried to summon djinn to be his army. However, the sultan Suleiman bin Daoud didn't believe that was such a great idea, and he summoned all of the magical djinn he could to his side. A war ensued with Iblis being defeated and bound into the form of a statue that remains in some ruins near Raseir.

It seems as though the current Emir of

Raseir has suddenly disappeared, and there are some disturbing tales about what is going on in the southern city. Guess who is going to solve the mystery?

You may play *QFGII* with your character from *QFGI* or start fresh with a new character. You must select one of three professions: fighter, magic-user, or thief. Should you complete the game using this character, a great feature of *QFGII* is that you can replay the game twice more in the role of the other professions. You'll find that the solutions to puzzles and other factors do change depending upon your occupation.

The city of Shapeir is quite a change from the medieval European location of *QFGI*. You feel as though you have been transported to the Arabian Knights. (The music is well scored and plays extremely well through the Roland MIDI sound system.) The streets are a real maze, but if one learns how to use the enclosed map, you can find your way around fairly easily after only a couple false starts. As usual, save your game at every opportunity.

*QFGII* does not use the new parser system employed by the King's Quest games. You must type in your commands. We advise you talk to everyone you meet, and follow-up on your initial questions. As *QFGII* is time based, certain events are best accomplished on or before specific dates. A map and a compass would help, but none of the street hawkers or shop vendors seem to want your Spielburg cash!

There are special guilds for each of the professions. Ask the locals for information about these areas. (The command "Ask about," followed by the name of the item you are inquiring about, always elicits a response.)

You'll eventually need to obtain a well-trained saurus to traverse the desert. You'll also need an ample supply of food and water. Be warned: There are some really nasty creatures out in the dunes, and not all threats are sand based. Look for exciting times with earth, air, water, and fire elementals! Listen to the natives when they discuss how to handle these creatures. You'll also find humans, gnomes, centaurs, and lizards hanging about as well. And don't miss entering the harem or listening to the poet. Oh, yes, you'll find that cash is extremely handy. If you don't have enough of the stuff, perhaps you should take on an add assignment or two from NPCs you meet.

*QFGII* is a highly playable and enjoyable fantasy role-playing game. For those who haven't played *QFGI*, don't fret, there is no requirement that you do so before tackling *QFGII*. The evil city of Raseir will require that you hone your character's skills for any chance of success, so that the old adage that practice makes perfect is quite applicable here. The Coles have created a great follow-up to *QFGI*. *QFGII* requires a great deal of player interaction, is highly entertaining, and could quite possibly become a classic FRPG. You ought

to check it out at your retailers for inclusion in your PC/MS-DOS library.

By the way, *QFGI* and *QFGII* will both be upgraded to VGA versions early next year. You can also expect *QFGIII* to be released in VGA format.

#### Cybergenic Ranger: Secret of the Seventh Planet \*

Symtus (phone n/a)

PC/MS-DOS version

Price n/a

Your parents launched you out of a spacecraft to save you from renegade robots, just as these metal miscreants stormed into the vessel and killed your folks. However, you were wounded during the ensuing battle and hovered near death until someone found you. Cybergenic enhancements to your body saved you, turning you into the Cybergenic Ranger, ready to battle the renegade robots.

Unfortunately, some good graphics and music cannot save you from the boredom of this game. There are only two action screens, and they are controlled by the keyboard only! Your ship starts off with no weaponry at all, so you have to search planets to find items that will enable your ship to become more powerful. These space scenes are extremely slow and look like a space game from the early '80s with VGA graphic support added.

Asteroid fields are virtually impossible to dodge. The response time between hitting the space bar to fire your lasers and destroying the asteroids or other obstacles is so slow that the objects usually hit you. There is also no selection as to the geographical areas where you can pilot your ship. The computer automatically zips you to the next planet or place of interest, and all you can do is sit back and try to avoid being killed.

Beaming into other ships or onto planets is not much better. The scene changes from a first-person perspective to a side view. The graphics are a bit better, but the action is still boring and slow. Your character can jump, kneel, and shoot at a variety of creatures that sometimes simply appear out of nowhere. An energy bar at the top of the screen reflects how much damage you can sustain before dying. Creatures, after being killed, sometimes leave energy or objects lying about that you can pick up to aid your quest. After moving and shooting your way to your goal, you might encounter a boss who must be eliminated before you can proceed.

*Cybergenic Ranger* has a good soundtrack and some great, still-scene VGA graphics. The graphics for the action sequences and the mechanics of the sequences themselves are poor. We became frustrated and bored after playing this game for a couple of hours. There are far better spaceflight simulators from companies like Origin, and much better horizontal scrolling shoot-'em-ups from Psygnosis. Don't waste your money on this one.



F29 Retaliator (Ocean Software)

#### F29 Retaliator \*\*\*\*

Ocean Software (Elec. Arts: 415-571-7171)

Amiga version \$49.95

If you would really enjoy flying a jet combat simulator, but wouldn't like the complex stark realism of higher-priced simulators, *F29 Retaliator* is for you. You can simply sit down and start flying without having to learn complex commands, and go head-to-head against enemy fighters without first researching complex weapon systems.

*F29 Retaliator* cuts corners in its attempt to bring flight simulation to Amiga gamers. When you fly away from your selected combat theater, you are so informed and the terrain below your jet becomes featureless. You have numerous flight and weapons capabilities, all accessible through the keyboard. A command reference on a sheet of paper is included with the simulation and proves that this flight simulator is one that is easy to play.

When you start the game, you may find yourself immediately heading for the ground. The game requires that you indicate your control method. We prefer using the Amiga mouse, so the minute the "crash" exercise started, we had to press the M key to gain control of our F29. Your first few flights may seem to be an exercise in futility as you learn your way through the controls (you'll crash a lot), but once you get the hang of it, *F29* offers exciting flights and combat scenarios. Over 100 missions in four battle scenarios are available to test your piloting expertise.

The game also features multiple external and internal views. This offering presents some complex operations with an easy-to-fly simulator presenting the highest state-of-the-art aircraft. If you're into flight simulators, better try this one out at your dealer.



Sonic the Hedgehog (Sega)

#### Sonic the Hedgehog \*\*\*\*\*

Sega (415-508-2800)

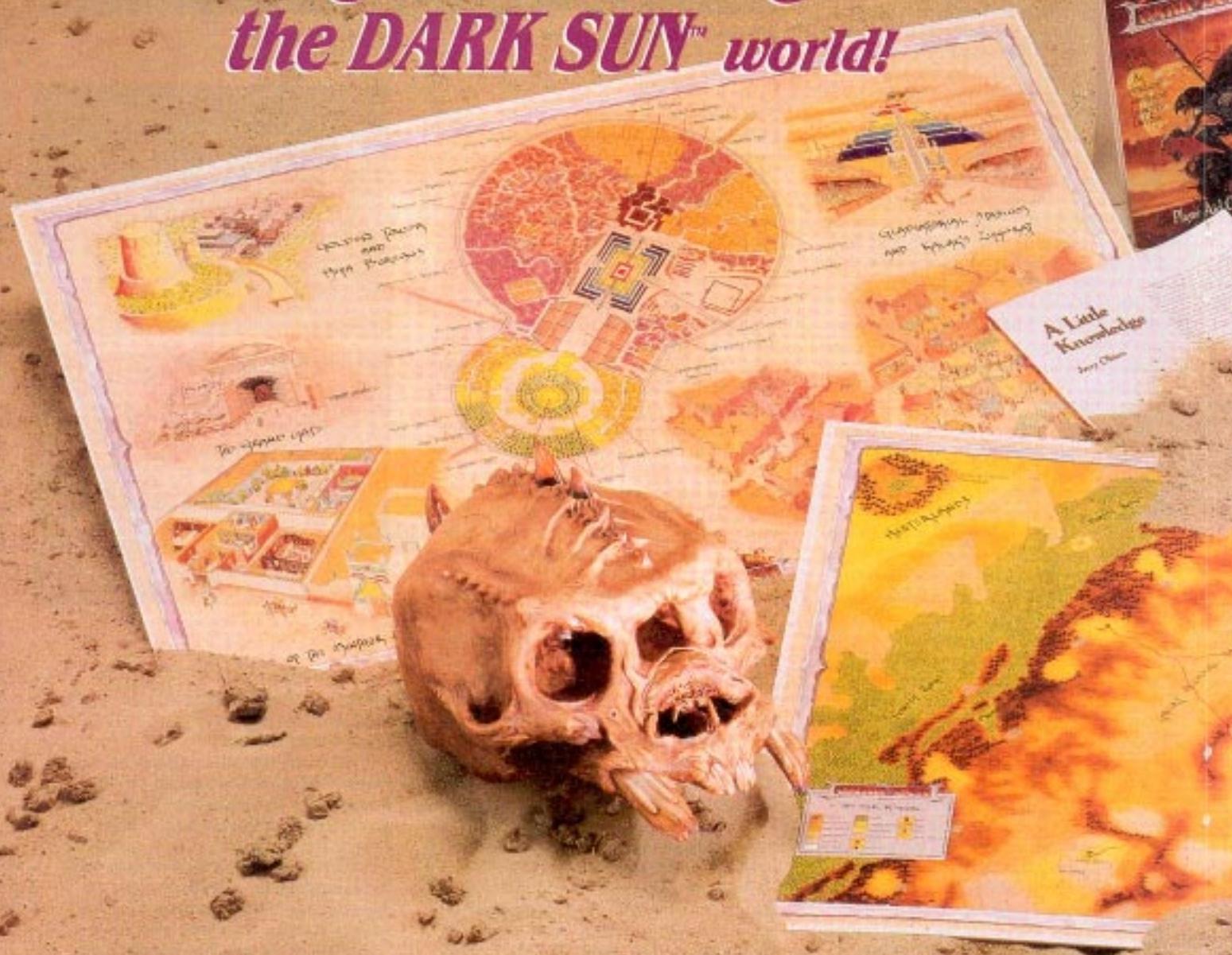
Sega Genesis version

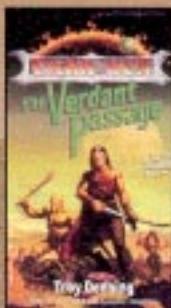
Every game machine seems to have a mascot character that, sooner or later, becomes the star of a smash home video game. Nintendo has Mario, the Turbo-Graphx has Bonk, but what about the Genesis? Well, look no further than Sonic the Hedgehog, now the mascot for the Sega Genesis. Better than that, he has a video game that is a visual spectacle.

Dr. Ivo Robotnik, a mad scientist, has turned innocent animals into evil robots. It is Sonic's job to travel through six levels, each consisting of three acts, to stop Ro-



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Also inside are two 96-page rule books, two 24-page flip books, two full-color maps, and a short story, "A Little Knowledge," that accompanies the exciting DARK SUN adventure.



DARK SUN Module  
Available in January 1992





Sonic the Hedgehog (Sega)

botnik and free the animals from their mechanical prisons. How can Sonic complete this monumental task? With Super Speed and Super Sonic Spin attacks, that's how. As Sonic moves around the wonderfully animated and colorful backgrounds, he encounters Robotnik's minions. When you press down on the control pad, Sonic rolls into a ball that can smash through the robot and release the poor animal trapped inside.

To achieve Super Speed while Sonic is walking, hold down the left or right controller and he runs faster than any other video character we have seen. This enables him to jump farther, avoid traps, and find beneficial items.

Sonic has only three chances to complete the adventure, but "continues" can be found in the game that allow you to forge on, smashing robots. At the end of each level, Sonic must face Robotnik, who uses a mechanical device. Sonic must use his Super Sonic Spin attack several times in order to destroy the device and hold off Robotnik for yet another level.

Spikes, lava, the robots, and other various Anti-Sonic devices are present. If Sonic touches one of these devices, he loses one of his three chances to complete the game. However, Sonic can pick up rings that protect him. If he runs into an obstacle while carrying rings, he will be safe, but the rings might fall off Sonic. By picking up 100 rings, Sonic adds one extra chance to complete the game. Other items that Sonic can find include a shield that protects him and his rings from being attacked, power sneakers that make Sonic run even faster, invincibility for a set amount of time, and a bonus stage.

The bonus stage is called a secret zone, and it can be found only by exploring. Inside the zone is a chaos-filled world that allows Sonic a chance to rack up points

and extra chances. To add to the confusion, the background here is almost hypnotic to watch. Combining these two effects makes escape a most difficult task for Sonic to complete.

In order for Sonic to leave a secret zone, he must either find the goal sign or pick up a chaos emerald. Other objects inside the secret zone include bumpers, 1-Ups, jump stands, and blocks that reverse the rotation of the secret zone or speed up or slow down the rotation. This is a very difficult part of the adventure, but with practice you can make it.

The graphics and animation in *Sonic the Hedgehog* make this a serious contender for the best video game of the year. The cartoonlike animation of Sonic is incredible. When he is running very fast, Sonic's legs turn into circles, like those of the Road Runner. Moving too close to an edge has Sonic precariously balancing on it with one leg. The detail is excellent, from the backgrounds to the innocent-looking animals that run off the screen when Sonic destroys a robot. The sound is great as well. Some serious programming went into the making of *Sonic the Hedgehog*.

This is a very addicting game, because you cannot find all the hidden power-ups and secrets in one sitting. Each act has several different places to visit, and Sonic has various methods he can use to find these locales. It may take a while to find an area best for the hedgehog to enter. Younger kids will love this one as much as an older audience. This is the best character game yet released by Sega—a hat's tip to Sega for a job well done.

## Game conversions

Several recent software conversions have come to our attention, most ported to the Macintosh or the Amiga from their

original PC/MS-DOS versions. We'll cover the more outstanding software entertainments here.

### Gunboat

Accolade (408-985-1700)

Amiga version

\$49.95

Original review: DRAGON® issue #159

This is a good conversion. The graphics are not quite as good as we had expected them to be on the Amiga, but perhaps that's because the VGA graphics on PC/MS-DOS machines is so much better than what was available earlier on those computers. Sound effects may be turned off, but we found the gunboat's engine noise a good game enhancement as it let us know, without a doubt, when we had increased or lowered our speed.

Gunfire from the machine gun in the bow seems somewhat slow when compared to incoming rounds. Also, there is a tendency for far-off terrain to suddenly arch on the screen. What before looked like green jungle on the horizon suddenly arched up as though it were an opening drawbridge, flickered momentarily, then disappeared. This also happened with a couple of hootches and some of the water. Obviously, some of the pixels have a mind of their own and decided to portray themselves in this manner due to some minor faulty algorithm for perspective views of distant terrain.

As with the original PC/MS-DOS version, our main complaint is the lack of realism of the enemy soldiers, as they stand on the shoreline along the river to fire at a PBR, then remain standing there when the PBR returns fire!

The missions are quite exciting, and the Amiga interface allows for either key board or joy stick play. Too bad the mouse couldn't have been incorporated as the input/output device of choice.

### Harpoon

Three-Sixty (Elec. Arts 415-571-7171)

Amiga version

\$59.95

Original review: DRAGON issue #156

Harpoon remains one of the best war-game programs ever created. We rated the Macintosh version highly; the Amiga version is certainly well coded, although we occasionally found the switch between different windows somewhat slow.

Harpoon also happens to be one of the most complex war simulations offered. Dealing with submarine warfare is no easy task for any simulation, and *Harpoon* features every possible detail you could wish for in such an environment. The included tutorial is well written and covers the major features of the simulation. However, the massive operations manual (about 200 pages long) will become a constant reference for you as you play more advanced scenarios.

*Harpoon* is thoroughly engrossing, but be forewarned that you have a great deal to learn before you can even think of becoming an accomplished NATO com-

mander. The release of additional scenarios make *Harpoon* one of those high gaming/dollar-value ratio offerings that should be located somewhere in your software library.

#### Railroad Tycoon \*\*\*\*\*

MicroProse (301-771-6717)  
Macintosh version \$59.95  
Original review: DRAGON issue #165

We are annoyed—not at MicroProse for releasing this railroad-empire simulation in Macintosh format, but at ourselves for spending so much time involved in its environment. Playing *Railroad Tycoon* on the Macintosh has put severely us behind in our review cycle. It's more than fun—it's addictive!

We took our first look at *Railroad Tycoon* in its PC/MS-DOS format and enjoyed it. In fact, it won our Beastie Award for best simulation of 1990. The Macintosh version offers both game and graphic improvement. One warning to those who are running less powerful Macs: Watch for slower game operation as you build more tracks and run more trains.

The more noticeable improvements in the Macintosh version include an interface that is totally operable with the mouse. There is no keyboarding at all. All of the information screens, displays, and game reports now open in Macintosh windows. Plus, you can change the more important windows (Display, Train Roster, and Word View) into any size you wish to fit on the screen. We found that having the Train Roster running as a window below the Display window was very convenient. This allowed us to view a train's composition without opening up an individual train information window. With the reduced area display indicating all shipments waiting at various terminals, stations, and depots, you can command your empire for several minutes without switching windows, making changes to trains as needed with the click of the mouse.

There is also a new window called the Regional Display Plus. This is a four-to-one expansion of the Regional Display that reveals the entire world you've selected for your railroad empire (Europe, England, Eastern United States, or Western United States). You can also dissolve a railroad if its value becomes one of diminishing returns, and you can declare bankruptcy (which increases to 1% your interest cost for selling new bonds). Car costs go up only when the number of cars with your train are increased, and you can use the Command-F command to find any city in your area of the world that you wish. A complete list of all cities can be found in the back of the exhaustive and extremely well-written user's manual. You can invest in only one other railroad at the Investor and Financier difficulty levels (the other two levels are Mogul and Tycoon), and you maximize your empire at 32 trains, 32 depots/stations/terminals, or 96 signal towers/depots/stations/terminals.

In our estimation, *Railroad Tycoon* has improved upon its PC/MS-DOS beginnings. If you own or have access to a Macintosh with color capabilities, you absolutely have to purchase this simulation. We have yet to see a better game conversion this year!

#### Wizardry: Bane of the Cosmic Forge \*\*\*\*

Sir-Tech Software (315-393-6451)  
Macintosh version \$59.95  
Original review: DRAGON issue #168

Sir-Tech has ported this great fantasy role-playing game to the Macintosh. The company ported a bit too much of the IBM feel of the game in the process; nonetheless, the overall game play and mechanics of the new version of this soon-to-be classic software-based FRPG make it the best of the series, and the Macintosh version should be acquired by all Mac gamers.

The new game is not just a facelift from the other Wizardry scenarios, but is a total change. Users can select from 11 races, with professions including the fighter, mage, priest, thief, ranger, alchemist, bard, psionic, valkyrie, bishop, lord, samurai, monk, and ninja. Spell-casters ultimately have 77 spells to chose from, from the realms of Fire, Water, Air, Earth, Mental, and Magic. Spell-casters aren't limited in this game by the number of spells that can be cast in a day, but each does have a certain number of spell points that are different for each realm. Combat involves many calculations, as many as 100 for one swing of a sword. When encountering hostile creatures, characters can choose to fight (using a number of methods), parry, change equipment, cast a spell, use an item, change position within the ranks, hide, run, and (for draconis) breathe acid.

*Bane of the Cosmic Forge* has superb game mechanics and difficult puzzles that will occupy most gamers for a long time. This game is well worth the investment. The only problems we had with the port to the Macintosh was that the graphics and the game itself were identical to the IBM EGA version. Even the file names carry their PC/MS-DOS extensions, such as .ega or .cga or .pic. No enhancements were made to access the color capabilities of the Macintosh II family of computers.

The graphics are not the best we have seen, but the game kept us questing for hours and days on end. It is good to see Sir-Tech porting over its better role-playing games for Macintosh gamers. This adventure is a big plus to any FRPG player's library.

#### Letters

Eric Rosenberger of Falls Church, Va., seems to be the only one who caught the publisher's name error in issue #169, though perhaps others thought the listed name of "Psychosis" made sense. Our apologies to Psygnosis, the publisher of both *Shadow of the Beast* and *Shadow of the Beast II*.

Todd Drexel of Colorado is in dire need of some *Dragon Wars* help. "Please tell me how to get the magic boots and how to enter the College of Magic. I know that I have to be in the northwest corner of the city of the Yellow Mud Toad and that I have to raise the toad, but I don't know how to do that! At the College of Magic, I can use the spectacles and enter the room with the flame, but I'm not sure what I have to do to get past it. Thanks!" Let's see who answers Todd's call expeditiously!

#### Clue corner

##### Bard's 'Me I (Electronic Arts)

This clue is for the PC/MS-DOS version of the game only. When you leave the Adventurer's Guild, press the Z key. A stone elemental will join your party. The most hit points this elemental will possess are 33, but if he dies, all you have to do is press the Z key once again and he's back.

Shane Henderson  
Newmarket, Ontario

##### Battletech (Infocom/Activision)

The following is a hint list for the combinations of the doors in the cache:

Red	Blue	Yellow
1	3	5
2	7	18
15	14	11
13	31	4
29	12	6
25	33	10
20	27	22
17	19	26
28	24	16
8	9	21
30	23	32

Roger Bock  
Melbourne, Australia

##### BUCK ROGERS®: Countdown to Doomsday (SSI)

1. Should you manage to enter the Desert Runner Village, make certain you join the band of warriors. They'll be supportive when the RAM forces attack. You've got to give the females and the cubs enough time to escape through the tunnels.

2. In order to enter the Mercurian Mariposa, you'll have to find a Retinal Lockpick. Perhaps the father of a Lowlander child can help you in this endeavor.

3. Find the airshafts in the Spyship. They'll allow you access to decks one through nine.

The Lessers

##### Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI)

1. In the sewers of Tilverton, when you get to the room with the otyugh shaping dung into artistic features, agree to get the food. Don't bother with the shiny thing, it's not that valuable. Get out of the room and go west as far as you can before head-

ing south; remember, keep to the west. You may have to fight at a checkpoint, but you'll avoid a fight with some neo-otyugh.

2. Make certain you have a female on your team for the drow elf caves outside Hap. Walk west and through the archway to the south. *Don't attack!* You'll save yourself a lot of unnecessary battles with patrols if you keep your swords sheathed.

3. On top of Dracandros's Tower, parlay with the dragons to reassure them you are not going to kill them. Don't worry, Dracandros will still be awaiting you in the courtyard.

4. If you have Minor Globe of Invulnerability on someone, a beholder's gaze won't affect that character. Just don't cast Dispel Magic near that character.

For those who are running the game on a C64/128 computer, obtain a program called Di-Sector. With it, you can change the file names of your *Pool of Radiance* characters to *Curse of the Azure Bonds* character files. This way, you'll get all of the equipment you had in *Pool*. Also, all of your Wands of Magic Missiles become Wands of Minor Globes of Invulnerability!

Erik Myers  
St. Agatha ME

#### **Drakkhen (Draconian) (Paragon)**

1. Be certain to check your character sheets often; you'll note that your characters tend to pick up items.

2. Some items have the same name but differ in their amount of protection. There are two cuirasses, three different bucklers, two types of dresses, and three distinct helmets.

3. There is a most valuable item hidden from view by Prince Hordtken.

4. The more expensive buckler and the shield provide identical protection; shop wisely!

5. Remember, time heals all wounds.

6. The Swordsman in the Icelands has only one of some items. Decide who really needs that item the most, or who can use it most effectively.

7. There are certain birdlike creatures in the marsh whose death rewards you with an extraordinary amount of gold.

Nathan Scott  
Spearsville LA

#### **Ultima VI (Origin)**

1. In the gargoyle city, go as far south as you can. Then proceed east until you find a dungeon. In the dungeon, Captain Johnne will give you a scroll. This scroll allows you to communicate with the gargoyles.

2. Near the dungeon is the house of a gargoyle with whom you must speak. Remember his name, Valkadesh. Follow his instructions to find the gargoyle leader. Surrender to the leader and find Naxatilor. Obey Naxatilor's commands. Once you have found and restored the gargoyle lens, go to the Lycaeum. Find Epheridemes and ask him to make a concave lens. Give him a glass sword, and he will make the lens.

3. Go to Sutek's Isle. Blow up his front

door and use a Telekinesis spell to lower the drawbridge. Descend to the dungeons, then enter the tunnels. Search until you find a body and look for the balloon plans. Go to Minoc and have a large basket constructed. Head for Paws and have silk thread made. At the same time, buy some more rope. Charlotte in New Magincia can weave the silk, then have the woven silk made into a silk bag in Paws. In the sewers beneath Lord British's castle, you can find a cauldron. Use the balloon plans, and a balloon will be created.

Jeff Husges  
Newbury Park CA

#### **Wasteland (Electronic Arts)**

1. The cloning machine in the Sleeper Base is activated by learning the clone skill in the library (first floor), going down to the second floor, and installing a power converter (an item you find in the sewers beneath Las Vegas) into a machine in the northwest corner. Go down to the cloner, open it with a Secpass (1 or 3), then find a pair of jugs elsewhere. Take the jugs to the clone-fluid machine and fill them. Once you have it, take the fluid to the clone pods and have a character go down with the jug full of clone fluid. It will take a while, but the character cloned is an exact replica of the one who went in.

2. Once you have freed the prisoners and killed Finster in Finster's base, have a character with high intelligence (and a lot of ammo) go into the Mindlink. He should have high Cyborg skills. Put the helmet onto the Mindlink, and the character will enter Finster's mind maze. The riddles are somewhat hard (FINSTER, NOBODY, and ICEBERG are answers to three of them). When Finster says that you are dead, use your intelligence to revive yourself. After you have killed a couple of Finster clones, as well as a huge Finster, you will be rewarded with Secpass B.

Darren MacLennan  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

#### **Wizardry: Bane of the Cosmic Forge (Sir-Tech)**

1. Tell the guy in the tower "snoopcheri." 2. Find the treasure in the underground lake at 3E and 1N from the red X painted on the rock.

3. Use the mystery oil on the drawbridge controls. Push the buttons in the following order: 532451, where the upper left choice is one.

4. Tell Queequeg "giant mountain." 5. The password for the Captain's Den is "skeleton crew."

6. Use the miner's pick to clear any blocked passages and also to hit the Rock of Truth.

7. Combine the four rubber strands into a new rubber band.

8. Smitty will fix the broken cog. 9. The demon child is named Rebecca. 10. Tell Mail Lai, on the island of the keep, "reclamation."

11. Return the pipe to the giant caterpil-

lar to get the red mushrooms.

12. When you are put in jail, eat the red mushrooms to escape.

13. Try feeding the giant snake in the wizards' cave.

14. Fix the catapult by replacing the rubber band and put the fixed cog in it. The ammunition for the catapult is the large boulders; you should obtain at least two of them.

15. Use the pirate ring to read the dead-man's log.

16. To cross the wide chasm, you need the large coil from the belfry and the hook hand from the pirate. Simply MERGE the two together to obtain a grapping hook!

17. A hellcat guards the wizards' lair.

18. Tell the great Delphi "We are fascination," then "We seek divination."

19. The (three) holy wooden daggers can be found on the old ship.

20. Wear the goat mask in order to gain entrance to the temple.

21. Equip the staff of Aram in order to cross the initial pit in the temple.

22. There is a secret door behind the altar of the cosmic forge.

23. The security code is "the hand of destiny."

24. The hardest part of this difficult game is the fight with Dracula and Rebecca. Prepare all possible defensive spells before combat. In the first round of the fight, invoke the silver cross. Now, have the fighters hack with the holy daggers and mirrored shards. Have the spellcasters keep casting defensive spells (Dracula and Rebecca are resistant to all offensive spells). Throw all bottles of holy water and hope for the best!

Anonymous contributor

#### **Wizardry II: Knights of Diamonds (Macintosh version) (Sir-Tech)**

1. For some extremely useful information on the second level, make your way through utter darkness. We suggest the following: go south four squares, west one square, south two more squares, west one square, south three squares, then turn to the east. Try Kick. You will have to pay a price, however.

2. Once you get through the maze on the third level (assuming you actually do get through the maze), you'll come across a large empty room with doors to other rooms. Try the one in the center and be ready to use TILTWAIT.

3. The answer to the sphinx's riddle on the sixth level is an anagram of the line "That King, he finds doom."

The Lessers

Our fax machine is still in fine operating condition, so if you'd prefer to send us a fax, our fax number is (209) 832-5742. Your game hints and other comments are always welcome, and we appreciate the cooperative attitude our DRAGON Magazine readers exhibit in helping each other with adventuring tips. You are a fantastic group! Until next month, game on!

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# The Possibilities Are Endless

The TORG\* game: Going beyond the Possibility Wars



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The TORG\* game, a 1990 release from West End Games, is a role-playing system with lots of potential because of its premise. A number of other universes ("cosms") have invaded Core Earth (our "normal" world), changing the reality they found there to whatever was the norm on their home planes. Werewolves and vampyres now prowl the night streets of Borneo, dragons fly in the skies of England, and pseudo-dinosaurs rule New York City, with more subtle (but no less threatening) doings underway in Japan, France, and Egypt.

Unfortunately, the TORG system has one drawback: At the point where play begins, the invasion is three months in the past and the invaders are firmly established on Core Earth. When the invasions began, no one knew what to do. The governments of Core Earth at first accused each other of starting a war; by the time the truth was discovered and countermeasures could be taken, the Reality Raiders were firmly entrenched in their strange Realms. The nearly hopeless task of the player characters is to enter a war already almost lost and drive six foreign realities out of Core Earth's dimension.

But what if a group of fledgling Storm Knights (the PCs) trapped within one of the newly changed Realms had fought back immediately and effectively, right from the beginning of the invasion and not three months afterward? Or what if they managed to halt the invaders before the alien bridgehead could be consolidated? And what if, against overwhelming odds, they actually managed to defeat the rulers of a foreign cosm, driving the Raiders back to their home world and saving part of Core Earth for Earthlings?

The answer to all three questions is the same: It would make a great adventure setting because, from the perspective of the players, it may be more fun to actually defeat the invaders than to continue fighting a losing war against them for years after the invasion is a *fait accompli*.

The following is a set of campaign ideas using the TORG game rules, each with a unique campaign set-up. Consider the possibilities.

## #1: A gram of prevention

As any dentist or military strategist could tell you, it's easier to stop an invasion (of tooth decay or alien Possibility Raiders) at its beginning than after it's had a chance to establish itself. A gram of prevention is worth a kilo of cure.

Despite its overall success, the invasion of Core Earth did not progress exactly as the Possibility Raiders had planned. There were originally to be seven invading cosms, but the invasion of the U.S.S.R. was prevented by a single Storm Knight, a psychic girl named Katrina Tovarish, who foresaw the arrival of the Raiders and told the Soviet army where to find the *stelae* (artifacts of alien technology) marking the arrival site of the invaders. When the stelae were destroyed, the seventh invading Maelstrom Bridge couldn't form, and the U.S.S.R. was saved.

Katrina Tovarish was the result of the decades-long Soviet research into ESP and psychic warfare. Conceivably, if other Core Earth governments had funded similar research programs, they too would have been warned of the impending invasions, and would have been able to do something to stop them early in the campaign.

The characters in this scenario are part of such a program, either members of the Pentagon's Psychic Warfare Department or part of a normal Army or Marine unit whose purpose is to assist and protect the "Psychic Warriors." They should be natives of Core Earth and have either psychic abilities, military backgrounds, or a combination of the two.

Initially, possibility energy will be more difficult for the Core Earthers to employ than in a standard TORG game. Thus, players will not be able to spend possibility points during play until they come into close contact with a Possibility-Rated character from a different cosm, as only that clash of cosms will cause the "moment of crisis" needed to bring on their transformation.

As the exact nature of the psychic disturbance caused by the stelae hasn't yet been revealed by a full-scale invasion, the characters will be in the dark about what's going on, except for whatever their investigations and psychic powers reveal. Instead of fighting swarms of Raiders, they will have to contend with small groups of scouts, sent a few months in advance from the soon-to-arrive cosms in order to plant the stelae that will mark the invasion route for the rest of their horde. If the players are particularly successful, their characters can prevent the predestined history of the game before it has a chance to begin.

## #2: Rapid deployment

Of course, the Soviet Union had to be rather lucky to predict the alien invasion, because psychic powers like Katrina's were more difficult to employ before the transforming effects of the Reality Storms began. Most Core Earth psychics before the onset of the Possibility Wars would

have been able only to bend spoons and predict horse race results with their mental abilities. But once the War began, some of them would find themselves suddenly able to perform psychic feats they'd only dreamed of before.

This scenario would involve the same Psychic Warfare Unit as described earlier, but the setting would be somewhat different. The Reality Raiders would have arrived, but the Psychic Warfare team would be organized and able to attack immediately thereafter, not having to wait the three months that regular forces took to fully mobilize.

The regular TORG rules and materials are used for this scenario and scenario 1, but the alien realms on Core Earth will not have reached the extent described in the world book or source books. Within these smaller realms, operations will still be governed by the foreign axioms, but a quick and decisive victory by the characters will be able to check the realms' expansion.

## #3: The private sector

Unlike the Soviet Union of Core Earth, the U.S.A. would also have had a number of private concerns running their own psychic research programs without government funding. A group of characters from one of these nonmilitary sources would probably not have the military connections and skills of the Psychic Warfare Unit; it would be more likely to consist of members of a university's parapsychology faculty and their psychic guinea pigs, or even the psychics who normally use their powers to make predictions for the tabloids.

Psychics wouldn't make up the entirety of this group; there would be other hangers-on picked up along the course of the adventure to add some muscle to the limited combat ability of the average university researcher. Combat success for this group would be more difficult than for a military-based one, but the military groups probably wouldn't do as well at investigating the situation and possibly negotiating their way out of dangerous confrontations.

The odds against this group turning back the tide of an alien invasion once it begins in earnest are implausibly high, so it is important that the characters prevent the formation of the Maelstrom Bridge if they want to succeed. As the scenario takes place before the invasion, the characters will be restricted in the amount of possibility energy they can employ (as per the first scenario described).

## #4: Just regular guys

And why should psychic characters be the only ones to have a chance at preventing the Reality Raids? In this scenario, characters are nonpsychics who manage to stumble over the plot of the Reality Raiders and have to cope with the situation without the benefit of psychic powers. Good character templates to choose for this scenario would be those whose careers before the Possibility Wars

began would have led them to uncover the alien scouts before the war, like Covert Operative or Intrepid Reporter.

The same restriction on the use of possibility energy that occurred in the first scenario would apply here, with characters performing only as lucky or skilled normal humans until they first meet Possibility-Rated opponents from a foreign cosm that would trigger their possibility powers.

## #5: Allies from otherwhere

In the official version of TORG, the Possibility Raiders weren't the only ones to come to Core Earth to fight in the Possibility Wars. Dr. Hachi Mara-Two, Tolwyn of House Tancred, and other Storm Knights from foreign cosms converged on Core Earth in order to combat the High Lords on their latest battle-field.

In this scenario, the players run a group of Storm Knights who set off at the beginning of the War to try prevent Core Earth from being devastated in the way their own cosm was. The player characters are not confused Core Earthers, new to their powers and to the concept of the Possibility Wars. They can use their powers with full effectiveness right from the moment of their arrival on Core Earth, instead of waiting for a "moment of crisis" to mature their abilities.

In fact, these characters would probably be more experienced and powerful than the relative newcomers from Core Earth. In order to simulate this greater experience, pre-war Stormers start with more than the initial 10 Possibilities, gaining either an additional 1-10 or a straight bonus of six Possibilities, at the player's choice. Characters are allowed to spend these points on improvements, as described on page 20 of the rule book. Players must choose character templates of a non-Core Earth cosm or create new ones, following the guidelines on page 141. It would be best if all of the characters came from the same cosm, but that isn't absolutely necessary.

## #6: Invaders from Earth

If Storm Knights from other cosms can come to Core Earth to fight the war there, it's only common courtesy for some Core Earth Storm Knights to return the favor. In this scenario, only one alien Storm Knight makes the journey to Core Earth, in order to recruit heroes to help rescue the recruiter's cosm, which is currently under siege. As this scenario takes place months or years in advance of the onset of War on Core Earth, the heroes recruited will have no idea of what sort of trouble they're about to meet.

There are two ways to detail the besieged cosm that the party comes to rescue: the game master (GM) can either create a campaign world from whole cloth, or adapt a sourcebook from some other game to the TORG system. Thus, a TORG campaign could be set in a fantasy

world different from Aysle (using TSR's AD&D®, Steve Jackson Games' GURPS®, or Bard Games' TALISLANTA® rules to provide a setting), or in a genre that the TORG system doesn't normally cover, such as a cosm in which giant Japanese-style mecha command the battlefield (like the worlds of Palladium's ROBOTECH®, FASA's BATTLETECH®, or R. Talsorian's MEKTON II® games).

Characters chosen for this mission would have to be those who exhibited the attributes of heroes before the question of Possibilities enters into it, or else there would be no reason for the recruiter to have selected them. Mercenaries, celebrities, law-enforcement officers, rescue workers, explorers, athletes, and movie actors who'd played the part of screen heroes would all be likely to catch the eye of a cross-cosm recruiter.

Unlike in the first scenario, characters would have their "moments of crisis" the instant they were transported to the besieged cosm. Thus, they would suffer no penalties during play unless something interfered with this initial journey.

## #7: Seizing the home ground

The recruiter from scenario #6 could be assembling a task force to strike at the home cosm of one of the invaders. This would be a particularly risky operation, as the invaders would have the home-team advantage. Not only would a whole world be ranged against the party, but the axioms of that world would favor the natives, not the Storm Knights. To help the relatively inexperienced Core Earth characters, the party could also include rebels, resisters, and defectors within the home cosm, such as the various costumed and super-powered crime-fighters of the Nile Empire.

Extrapolations can be made from the various TORG source books to form the home cosm from which the High Lords attack Core Earth, or you could again use source material from other games (the AD&D game's FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting for Aysle, R. Talsorian's CYBERPUNK® game for the Cyberpapacy,

Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU® game for Orrorsh, etc.).

## #8: After the war

In fact, while we're removing TORG characters from Core Earth and having to create new worlds for them to fight the High Lords on, why not move them out of the Possibility Wars altogether?

If a group of characters successfully prevents the Possibility Wars on Core Earth, there's no reason for you to close your campaign down. There's always more injustice to combat somewhere in the Infiniverse, on worlds of every sort that have their own problems to deal with, all untouched by the Wars. One thing is constant in the Infiniverse: Heroes are always in demand.

## #9: The other side

And for those wanting a really different TORG campaign, take a look at the other side of the coin; have the players take the roles of Reality Raiders trying to set-up shop on Core Earth or some other cosm.

The first thing that an invading cosm must do is scout out the territory it plans to invade. The scouts have a difficult mission, as they must escape the notice of the local inhabitants (something that is more easily done by a scout from Terra or Magna Verita than by one from Taka Ker), assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Core Earth defenses that the raiding force will have to face, and then set up the stelae for the invaders' Maelstrom Bridge.

Among the forces opposing the player-character scouting party will be a variety of NPCs of the sort described in scenarios #1, #3, and #4: psychics, reporters, and even average people who might discover the secret mission of the alien scouts. More important, the player characters will be fighting a deadline, as the Gaunt Man set a very specific timetable for the invasion of Core Earth. Even if the PCs' mission is undiscovered, the information they gather will be of little use if it is delivered to their home cosm too late (and that is likely to make their leaders very unhappy).

As this mission is as dangerous as it is

important, only experienced scouts will be sent. The player characters will all have extra Possibilities (as per scenario #5), and all templates should be from foreign cosms—modified to insure that their loyalties are toward their own cosm, where necessary. Good choices would be a loyal Contract Ninja (from Nippon Tech) or Jaz Fighter (from the Cyberpapacy), characters who have some ability to disguise themselves or blend in with a segment of the local population.

(I'd like to thank John Ross Kingsbury for the idea behind this scenario.)

## #10: Invasion gone bad

This scenario uses the same characters and set-up as the previous one, but it takes things a few months further in time. What if the initial scouting of Core Earth was successful, but the invasion itself faltered because of the activities of the sort described in scenarios #1-5 and #7?

The other-worldly characters in this scenario start off stranded on a hostile Core Earth that has been alerted to the presence of the Reality Raiders and is actively fighting against them. Perhaps here the Possibility Wars were ended before they began, meaning that the majority of Core Earthers might still be unaware of the aliens among them if the governments of Core Earth managed to keep the information from leaking to the press.

## What's possible?

Beyond the additional fun of being able to defeat the invading High Lords (or even be their most essential agents), these alternative scenarios offer two special benefits: They add dimensions of discovery and wonder as the events unfold around the characters (which is missing from a standard TORG campaign in which the early events of the Possibility Wars are handed out as part of the campaign history), and they still provide a source of surprises for players who have already read all of the TORG novels and rule books.

The TORG game has a lot of potential for adventures beyond the pages of the rule books, especially since a creative GM can think of ways to combine the TORG rules with just about any other fantasy or science-fiction novel or game on the market. The possibilities beyond the Possibility Wars are limitless.

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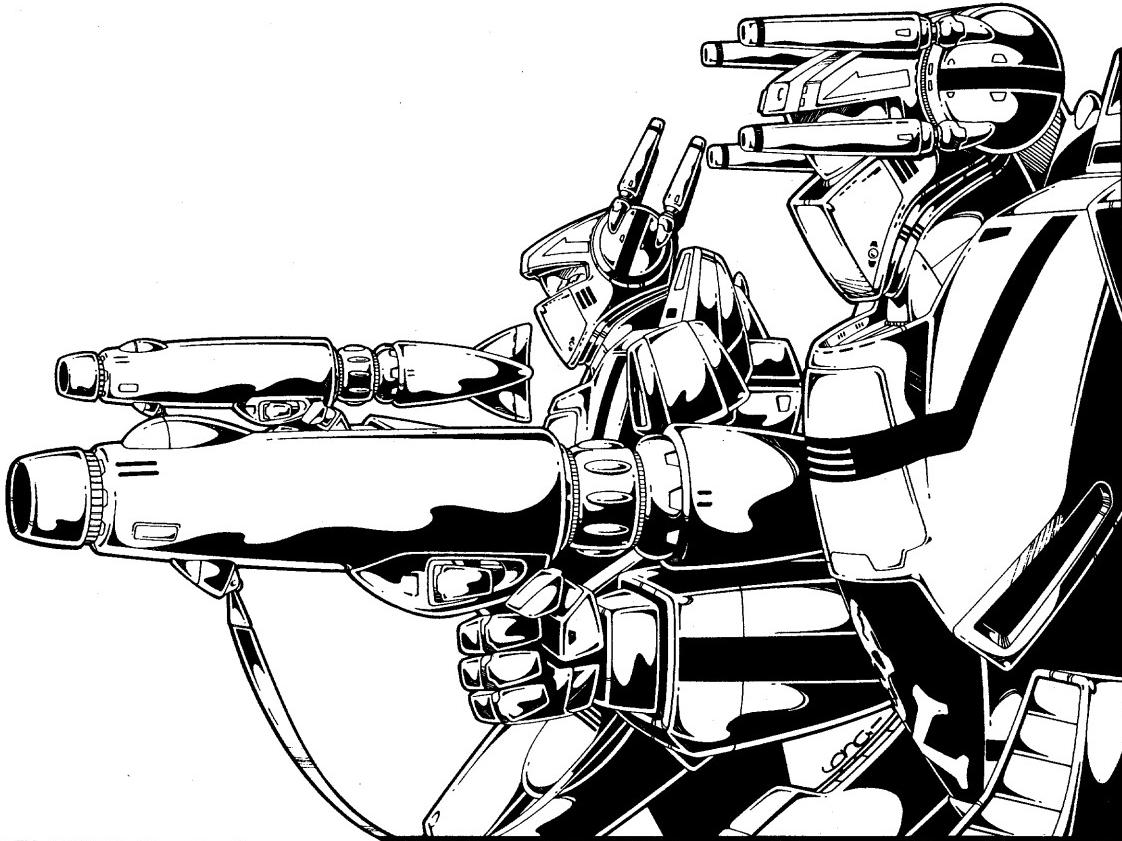
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# FORUM



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In response to the editorial in issue #164, I thought I'd air my views on the subject. Which character do I prefer to role-play and why?

I rank what I'll call freedom of action and the availability of a wide range of skills for my characters above all else when I make the decision of which character class to play. Freedom of action is the feeling that the character is his own individual and that his choices are not dictated by some other force. For this reason, I do not like role-playing priests of any sort. Priests, if role-played properly, must follow some predefined set of standards. A priest is not his own individual, as he must comply with some order or greater being. Many gamers enjoy this and do not think that their characters have lost any freedom of action, but this is only the case because they have chosen priests and accept the religious demands put upon them. If someone enjoys priests, then fine, but for me they restrict my character's individuality.

Warriors do not offer me a wide enough range of skills. They are very proficient in combat, but without magical items they have no means at their disposal with which to overcome an encounter except brute strength and training. True, quirks in their personalities could be developed, but this could be said of all character classes. Warriors, the heroes of fantasy, are a favorite among many gamers for their strength and simplicity, but for me they are not subtle enough.

Wizards, provided they have a few spells, definitely offer a wide scope for role-playing. Think of all the possible variations and results of an encounter depending on how the character's spell abilities were used. The wizard can be a very rewarding character, in my opinion, if you enjoy trying to be ingenious and creative with your spell-casting. The low-level wizard may discourage many due to his lack of spells, but the incentive is there, if only the character could just learn more about the art of magic!

Now I come to my favorite class: the devious, sneaky, cunning thief. With a limited combat potential, the thief must rely more on his wits to survive than brute strength alone. Stealth is needed alongside trickery. The thief is often subservient to a guild, but usually not morally bound to put the guild first. This is the difference between a priest and a thief. Personal greed could cause the thief to break guild regulations; if he were caught, however, the consequences could be very interesting. Furthermore, in the AD&D® 1st Edition rules a 10th-level thief even gained the chance to cast spells from scrolls. This gives the class even more scope and adds the thrill of uncertainty to the game. . . .

Being an ardent Tolkien fanatic, I love halfling thieves—who, by the way, do get away with murder.

Martyn Agass  
Swindon, U.K.

The letter written by Christine Wellman in issue #166 was superb! The way that she handled the tendencies problem was admirable. Alignment has always proven to be a rather distressing problem for myself and my players. Many characters in my campaign are neutral good because they can go from lawful to chaotic in the pursuit of good, and not worry about a heavy-handed DM making the experience points needed for the next level skyrocket upward (*DMG*, page 29). But I have never been able to come to a solid conclusion regarding alignment. I thank Christine for aiding me in that task.

In regard to the letter by Ahmed G. Amin (issue #155) and the follow-up letters written by Rob Williams and Jeremiah Lynch (issue #166), I felt that something more had to be said. I have never been accused of being a "killer DM," and I attribute that to the balance I try to maintain in my campaign. In my four years as a DM, I have never had a character actually die on any adventure when I have been the DM. I have had characters down to -9 hp and be saved by the quick thinking of their companions. I have had characters full of power, enthusiasm, and packing some powerful magical items go into customized dungeons, then come out with a few scraps of burned clothing clinging to their still-smoking bodies and babbling about the "horrors of the dark." I wholeheartedly agree with Mr. Lynch when he states that he makes his players believe that they are in a dangerous situation, when in fact they are not. I do that as much as possible in my campaign. Take a recent adventure I DMed: A rather powerful party set up camp one foggy night in the wilds. The moon was full and bright but brought little comfort to the tired party. Just as they were drifting off into a peaceful slumber, a savage howl tore through the night. Then another. Within seconds, there were sounds from all around the party. By now, the characters were up and into a tight defensive formation. The players were a bit wary, but not overly worried. I use lead miniatures in my game, so I walked over to my desk to grab about 20 of them. My players saw this and really got worried. From all sides, huge wolves attacked the party. The party was faring well at first, and they were confident they would win.

Suddenly, a monstrous blur of black fur streaked through the air, and landed right behind all the party members. The strange creature stood a towering 9' tall, with 3"-long fangs. It was the biggest werewolf the characters had ever seen (but of course I didn't tell them it was a werewolf). The elf in the party screamed out in surprise, while a dwarf spoke in cautious tones: "W-what do you want?" I twisted my face into an evil wolf-like grin, my pupils flared, and I spoke in a horrid screeching voice: "YOUR BLOOD!" By now, most of the players were freaking! They thought their characters would be torn in half by this beast.

Meanwhile, the eight other werewolves vaulted through the air, using hit-and-run tactics. When the battle was over, none of the characters had lost more than 10 hp. But at the time, they were sure death was imminent. So even though the battle was rather simple for a party of their stature, they were truly horrified at what might have happened. In case you are wondering, the adventure was from DUNGEON® issue #27, "Tarfil's Tomb." And I allowed a 2nd-level priest to go on such a high-level adventure because he thinks he can do anything.

There are many ways to make your players think twice about attacking something. My favorite method of bringing fear to my campaign is to use strange voices and faces, and overexaggerated monsters' proportions. Also, customizing creatures is very important. Never let the players assume that this fire elemental is the same as the last one they fought. A typical battle might go like this:

Player 1: "Oh, great. A fire elemental."

Player 2: "Don't worry. It can't touch us from up here. Fire elementals don't have missile weapons. Let's just waste it with missile fire."

Player 1: "Okay, I take out my crossbow +3."

Then you can grin in delight as your fire elemental throws parts of its body at the party. Or perhaps it can call down a *flame strike* once per day. Or how about surrounding the party with a *wall of fire* that faces inward?

Remember, you are the DM. If your players whine and try to quote the *Monstrous Compendium*, remind them, "I am the DM. This is my world. I can make things happen." Don't try to kill your player's favorite characters too often. However, if things ever get boring, you know what to do . . .

After reading Mr. Craig Hardie's letter in DRAGON issue #166, I was a bit perturbed. Mr. Hardie states that he began playing to "satisfy a creative desire." He goes on further and says not to forget "that there are any number of ways the rules may be interpreted. Let's explore the possibilities!" For one thing, the authors' of the articles on the FORGOTTEN REALMS® and DRAGONLANCE® game worlds are satisfying their creative desires. Therefore, whenever another article is written on the Realms, it boosts every DM's creativity.

Secondly, he speaks of exploring the possibilities. He should have no trouble adapting any of the information in the articles to his own world. There has never been an article in DRAGON Magazine that could not be adapted to any type of fantasy world. This even includes articles on the TOP SECRET/S.I.™, MARVEL SUPER HEROES™, and STAR FRONTIERS® games. If he would "explore the possibilities," he should be able to pick and choose any pieces of fantasy information that he wants. The important thing here is the idea itself, not the setting or characters. I do not know of a single DM who uses only the "official" information on the Realms. That is the beauty of the system! The Realms is a highly flexible campaign system that allows for any amount of customizing.

Jason Dunn  
Calgary, Alberta

In regard to Craig Hardie's letter of issue #166 concerning his annoyance with TSR's preoccupation with pregenerated campaign worlds, especially the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting, I agree completely. I, too, am annoyed at the preponderance of prepackaged products produced by TSR—products that, while sounding interesting, I would never buy since I don't follow the milieu.

I imagine it makes economic sense for TSR to attempt to consolidate its products under one (or three) banners, but then TSR loses its most attractive quality: its support for Dungeon Masters' own individually created game worlds. Unlike such role-playing games as Iron Crown's MERP\* game, where the players and game master are limited to one world, TSR allows for an endless variety of options, and the only limiting factor is your imagination.

TSR's recently released *Ruins of Undermountain* boxed set for the Realms, is a perfect example. It sounds interesting, and I've always been partial to underground campaigns, but it's not worth the effort to adapt the boxed set to my own milieu. I don't know who the Lords of Waterdeep are, let alone the Harpers, the Red Sashers, or Force Grey. I don't particularly care to find out. Even ignoring individuals, politics, and cultures peculiar to the Realms, the Ruins would still have the "feel" of the Realms. An infinitely more useful cavern campaign, from my point of view, is that of the Underdark from the *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*; lacking specifics such as politics, it is easy to cut and paste whichever part appeals to you, and place it easily into your own campaign. The creation of more generic adventures would be useful to a much greater number of Dungeon Masters, no matter what campaign world they use.

Again, if I don't care for these products, I can simply ignore them. This is not the case with DRAGON Magazine; articles devoted to the FORGOTTEN REALMS, DRAGONLANCE, WORLD OF GREYHAWK®, or the D&D® game's Known World settings are, usually, so much wasted space. I wish DRAGON Magazine would devote more space to articles concerning game mechanics, advice to Dungeon Masters, and new PC and NPC character classes. "The Dragon's Bestiary," new spells, and new magical items are always useful; the shared ideas of the "Forum" especially so. In that way, issue #167 was very nearly perfect; almost every article could be adapted to suit your own campaign.

Robert W. Heym  
Murray Hill NJ

I am writing in response to Craig Hardie's letter in issue #166 about pregenerated campaign worlds. When I first began to be a DM, I also thought that it would make more sense to make my own campaign. I had bought TSR's FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign set, and after looking through it I thought, why would anyone want to use a campaign they had not invented themselves? Then I tried to create my own world. That campaign lasted about two adventures. Creating a campaign is an enormous amount of work, and I am a student, so I do not always have the time required.

At this point, I had read some FORGOTTEN REALMS novels and grew more interested in this world. I began a new campaign set in this world, and it has been going strong for 2½ years now. It has grown from having only two PCs to having seven. I realized that a campaign world does not slow your creativity at all. There are thousands of miles of undeveloped land in the Realms ready for DMs to create their own settlements, characters, and adventures. This

campaign has many cultures, including European, Greek, Egyptian, Mongolian, Asian, and South American. This allows many more types of adventures than a small section of a world that the average DM has time to create on his own. If there is no world, how can characters have "save the world" type of adventures, which are often the most exciting?

Also, the tie-in to the novels that Mr. Hardie mentions adds interest to the new campaign. Many of my players read the FORGOTTEN REALMS novels, and they always grow more interested in the campaign than those who haven't read the novels. My players get excited when their characters meet and interact with characters that the players are familiar with from the novels.

Mr. Hardie says that other DMs are probably in agreement with him that far too much material is published for campaign worlds. This may be true, but there must also be many DMs who do not agree, or campaign material would not be so popular. I do not believe that having campaign material take the place of other material is a problem. Each month, TSR publishes many adventures in addition to campaign accessories. Although these adventures are usually set in one of TSR's campaign worlds, a DM who has his own world can easily put them into his own campaign with just a bit of change. This is not true for all adventures, such as world-shaking adventures like the Avatar series for the Realms, but most adventures are easily adaptable. As for space in DRAGON Magazine, that is not a big problem either. Each month, DRAGON Magazine is about 120 pages, and usually only about one article, a few pages, is devoted to campaign worlds. That leaves plenty of space for other material.

In conclusion, creating your own campaign may be fun and satisfying. But I don't believe most DMs have time to create a whole world by themselves. These pregenerated campaigns provide such DMs with what they need to run a campaign, but the campaigns are not so detailed that they restrict creativity. Also, the campaign can provide character interest. And in this gaming world, there is plenty of space to publish material on campaign worlds and anything else an RPG player may want. So take a new look at pregenerated campaigns, and realize the possibilities for adventures and excitement.

Salvatore Giraldi  
Braintree MA

In response to Craig Hardie's letter to "Forum" in DRAGON #166, I can say no less than "Bravo!" I am glad someone has finally come forth with the points that Craig raised as to the overwhelming amount of material that is slanted toward pregenerated worlds.

I have been DMing for 12 years, and I have used pregenerated worlds, namely TSR's WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting and the less-well-known HARNWORLD\* from Columbia Games. However, I have always used a world of my own creation for my regular gaming sessions.

It is my experience that all the people with whom I have played get more enjoyment out of the game when playing in a world that is specifically tailored to bring them the most enjoyment possible. Also, there is much more mystery and adventure involved in a world that only the DM has access to. Everyone is familiar with many aspects of the FORGOTTEN REALMS world even if they have never played in them. Doesn't familiarity take away some of the mystique of playing? And isn't the mystique part of what makes the AD&D game enjoyable?

Another negative aspect of using a pregener-

ated world I have found is that the DMs running them do not know everything that is contained in the source books for these worlds. It is terribly frustrating to players when the DM is constantly pausing for 15 minutes to look up that "one little thing" that he's forgotten. I have played in games where players got so bored during these pauses that they were falling asleep.

If one is DMing with his own world, there is rarely, if ever, a need to look things up. When you create something, it comes out of your head and will always be there.

I heartily agree with Craig's idea of running more articles in DRAGON Magazine on original AD&D campaigns and ideas for creating and running them. I, too, am tired of endless articles centered on the same old campaign worlds. In fact, although I have recently resubscribed to DRAGON Magazine, I hadn't read the magazine in three years because I got tired of the same old stuff. I wanted (and still want) to see more articles that are designed for helping DMs be more creative. It seems that most articles in DRAGON Magazine are there so that DMs needn't be creative at all; they can just take ideas from the pages of the magazine.

I do believe, however, that pregenerated worlds are essential and that DRAGON Magazine should continue to devote some space to articles on these worlds. The reason for this is that very few beginning DMs would know where to begin in creating their own worlds. They can go out and buy FORGOTTEN REALMS products and be DMing in a few days. There are not enough DMs as it is, and without pregenerated worlds there would be a lot fewer.

Not only is it ridiculous to expect beginners to create their own campaign settings, it is just as ridiculous to think that all DMs, no matter how experienced, have the time to do so. For these DMs, pregenerated worlds are a godsend. And Craig, you have to admit they have done an excellent job in making pregenerated worlds both exciting and very flexible.

I, however, will stick to my own world of Marid Dun that currently fills four three-ring binders and has taken 3½ years to complete (in fact, I wouldn't say it is really complete yet). How about it: Should DRAGON Magazine give the more creative AD&D game players equal time?

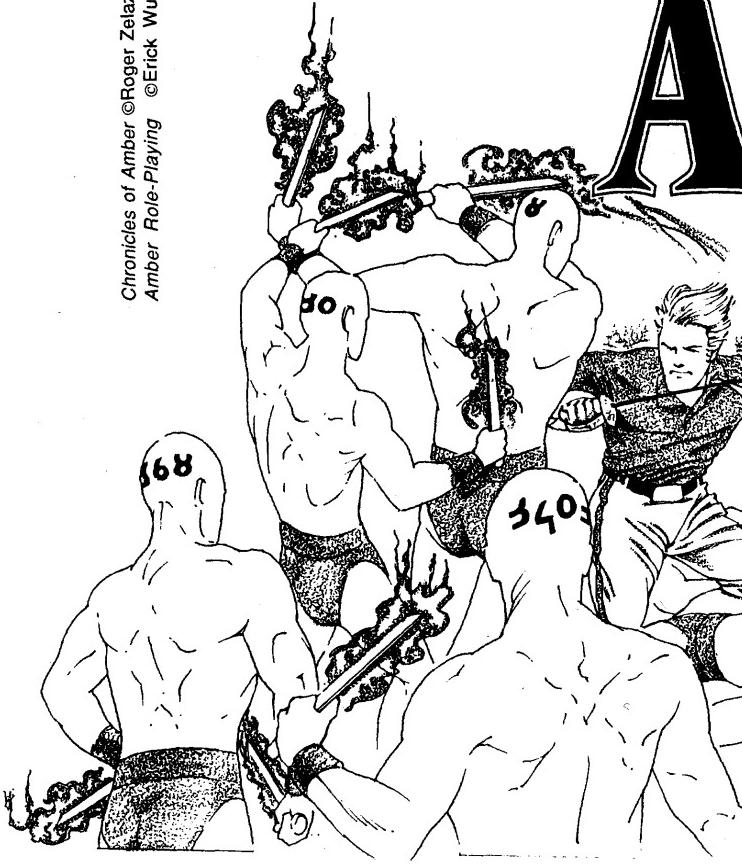
Shawn A. Chesak  
Milwaukee WI

I'd like to thank Leah Carson and her two friends for the letter they wrote in issue #164 on not allowing children to play the AD&D game. I have been playing since I was 8 (I am now 14) and I now DM for a group of four. Playing the AD&D game helps my players express themselves and allows them to use their creative and imaginative minds. It also helps build confidence.

I'd also like to comment on the letter Jeannine Cochran has in the same issue. One of my favorite classes to play is the paladin. It is the greatest thrill in the world to be a paladin and defeat a demon or devil. I hope you consider her idea.

Sandy Green  
Conifer CO  
Ω

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# CONVENTION CALENDAR

## Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

**WARNING:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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## NECRONOMICON, Oct. 11-13 FL

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Airport in Tampa, Fla. Guests include Barbara Hambly, Piers Anthony, Richard Lee Byers, and Joseph Green. Activities include a banquet, a fan cabaret, panels, an art show and auction, a dealers' room, dances, and an auction to benefit Wildlife Rescue. Registration: \$20 or \$8/day. Write to: NECRONOMICON '91, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569.

## QUAD CON '91, Oct. 11-13 IA

This convention, held by the Riverbend Gamers' Assoc., will be held at the Palmer Auditorium, in Davenport, Iowa. Guests include Sam Lewis. Events include BATTLETECH®, SHADOWRUN®, CHAMPIONS®, TOP SECRET®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, AD&D®, RENEGADE LEGION®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, Rifts®, and historical games, with a silent auction of game materials, a miniatures-painting competition, a dealers' room, and food. Registration: \$4/day or \$7/weekend before preregistered; \$5/day or \$10/weekend at the door. Game fees range from \$2 to \$4. Send large SASE to: The Game Emporium, 3213 23rd Ave., Moline IL 61265; or call: (309) 762-5577. No collect calls, please.

## WARP II, Oct. 11-13 OK

Sponsored by the War and Role-Playing Games Assoc., this convention will be held at the Trade Winds Central Inn in Tulsa, Okla. Author Ron Dee will our special guest. Events include an AD&D® 2nd Ed. tournament, with BATTLETECH®, RAVENLOFT™, CHAMPIONS®, SHADOWRUN®, and AXIS & ALLIES® games, as well as a dealers' room, combat demos, and a movie room. Registration: \$8/weekend in advance, \$12/weekend at the door. Write to: WARP, 5103 S. Sheridan Tulsa OK 74145; or call: (918) 744-9865.

## TITANCON '91, Oct. 11-13 VA

Sponsored by the Historical Simulation Society, this TITAN® game convention will be held at Old Caball Hall, on the campus of the University of Virginia in Charlotte, Va. Our Game Point Average system insures continuous TITAN® play for all to see, and is used to determine Team Champions and seeding of individuals for the Individual Championships games on Sunday. Trophies will be awarded. Registration: \$10 at the door. Write (and make checks payable) to: Brian Bouton, 5 S. Dooley Ave., Richmond VA 23221; or call: (804) 358-5517.

## BORDERCON, Oct. 12-13 NH

This convention will be held at the Salem, N.H., Econolodge between Boston Mass. and Concord, N.H. Events will include TITAN®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, and TWILIGHT 2000® games, with an APPA Baseball tournament. Other games and a dealers' room are also featured. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered, or \$15

for Saturday and \$10 for Sunday at the door, plus event fees. Write to: Denice Keller, c/o Econolodge, 1 Keewayden Dr., Salem NH 03079.

## COGACON '91, Oct. 12-13 OH

This convention will be held at the Masonic Temple in downtown Columbus, Ohio. Events include board, miniatures, and role-playing games, including RPGA™ Network events. Registration: \$5/day; no preregistrations, please. Write to: Terry Hollern, 1660 Evinrude Ave., Columbus OH 43229; or call: (614) 882-5241.

## P.E.W. KHAN UI, Oct. 12-13 PA

This convention, organized especially for gamers who enjoy political, economic, miniatures, and war games, is being held at the New Villa Inn in New Cumberland, Pa. Beyond the types of games listed above, other activities include a dealers' area, and meeting our guest of honor, Craig Taylor. Registration: Fees vary from \$5 to \$11, depending on date and length of registration. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 3rd St., New Cumberland PA 17070; or call: (717) 774-6676.

## BORDERCON '91, Oct. 18-20 MO

Cohosted by the Role-Players Guild of Kansas City and the Heart of America Historical Miniatures Gaming Society, this convention will be held at the Rodeway Inn in downtown Kansas City, Mo. Events include RPGA™ sessions, with AD&D®, PARANOIA®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, TORQ®, SHADOWRUN®, TALISMAN®, WARHAMMER®, AXIS & ALLIES®, BATTLETECH®, MARVEL SUPER HEROES™, and CHAMPIONS® games. Guests include Harold Johnson and Tim Beach of TSR, Inc. Other activities include a dealers' area, an auction and a miniatures contest. Registration: \$13. Send an SASE to: BORDERCON '91, P.O. Box 7457, Kansas City MO 64116-0157; or call: (816) 455-5020.

## CUBECON '91, Oct. 19 PA

Sponsored by the BCCC Gaming Guild and the Circle of Swords, this convention will be held at Butler Community College in Butler, Pa. Activities include RPGA™ events, with board, miniatures, and role-playing games, as well as a dealers' area and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$7. Send an SASE to: Circle of Swords, PO. Box 2126, Butler PA 16003; or call Dave at: (412) 283-1159.

## CONTRARY '91, Oct. 24-26 MA

This convention will be held at the Quality Inn & Conference Center in Chicopee, Mass. Events include several first-run RPGA™ events, with AD&D®, GURPS®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, SHADOWRUN®, TORQ®, and RUNEQUEST® games. Other activities include a Halloween costume party, a painting contest, and an auction. Registration: \$15 in advance, or \$20 at the door. Write to: CONTRARY '91, 626 N. Main St., East Longmeadow MA 01036; or call: (413) 731-7237.

## CON OF THE LIVING DEAD '91 TN

Sponsored by World of Games and Hobbies, this convention will be held in Memphis, Tenn. The site is yet to be determined. Events include CALL OF CTHULHU®, VAMPIRE®, GHOST BUSTERS®, RAVENLOFT™, GURPS HORROR®, CHILL®, and murder-mystery games. Other activities include a costume contest, a miniatures competition, and trick-or-treating. For site location and registration information write to: C.O.L.D., c/o World of Games and Hobbies, 2796 S. Perkins, Memphis TN 38118; or call: (901) 365-2080.

♦ indicates an Australian convention

‡ indicates a Canadian convention.

● indicates a European convention

**GAECON '91, Oct. 26-28**

This convention will be held at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Kilmainham, Dublin 8, Ireland. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, PARANOIA®, WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY®, and MEGATRAVELLER® games, plus trade stands and special guests. Registration: £3/day, or £8/weekend. Write to: Irish Games Assoc, c/o 49 Russell Ave., Clonliffe Rd., Drumcondra, Dublin 3, IRELAND.

**KETTERING GAME CONVENTION V****Oct. 26-27**

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include FRP, board, miniatures, computer, and RPGA™ games. A special feature is a Masters of Gaming tournament based on "Double Exposure," by Piers Anthony. Write to: Bob Van Gruenigen, 804 Willowdale Ave., Kettering OH 45429; or call: (513) 298-3224.

**NOVAG VI, Oct. 26-27**

This gaming convention will be held at the Elks' Lodge in Fairfax, Va. Events include historical miniatures, board, microarmor, and role-playing games. Other features include food vendors, dealers, and 24-hour gaming. Registration: \$8/weekend or \$5/day. Write to: NOVAG VI, c/o Wargames Hobby, 101 E. Holly Ave., Suite 5, Sterling VA 22170; or call: (703) 450-6738 after 1 P.M. EST Ask about lodging information.

**STAR CON '91, Oct. 26-27**

This SF&F/gaming convention will be held at Americano's Centre in Menasha, Wis. Write to: STAR CON '91, 1112 N. Lake St., Neenah WI 54956.

**WIZARDS' GATHERING II, Oct. 26 MA**

Sponsored by the Southeast Mass. Adventure Gamers' Society, this convention will be held at the Days Inn in Fall River, Mass. Events include AD&D®, RAVENLOFT™, SPELLJAMMER™, D&D®, MERP®, TORC®, STAR FRONTIERS®, BATTLETECH®, SHADOWRUN®, and AFTER-MATH® games. Other activities include contests for modules, art, and miniatures painting. Registration: \$5 until Oct. 12; \$7 thereafter, plus game fees. Cheaper "visitor" rates are available. Write to: WIZARDS GATHERING, P.O. Box 6030, South Station, Fall River MA 02724.

**GENERICON '91, Nov 1-3****MN**

This convention will be held at the Coffman Memorial Union on the University of Minnesota campus in Minneapolis. Activities include a costume contest, a post-Halloween dance, a miniatures competition, war and role-playing games and tournaments, an art show and auction, a dealers' room, panels, and the return of the *Star Trek* room. Registration: \$10 preregistered, and \$15 at the door. Make all checks payable to U of MN Gaming Society. Write to: GENERICON '91, c/o David Rust, 1826 Alameda St., Roseville MN 55113; or call: (612) 340-0139.

**VEGASCON '91, Nov. 1-3****NV**

This SF/gaming/comic-book convention will be held at the Palace Station hotel/casino in Las Vegas, Nev. Events include AD&D®, GURPS®, CHAMPIONS®, CAR WARS® and other board and role-playing games. Other activities include open gaming, panels and seminars, guests, movies, and a large dealers' area. Registration: \$20 preregistered, \$25 at the door. Make checks or M.O.s payable to VEGASCON. Write to:

VEGASCON, 4210 Chatham Cir. #1, Las Vegas NV 89119-6869; or call: (702) 733-7470.

**ROCK-CON XIX, Nov 2-3****IL**

This convention will be held at Rockford Lutheran High School in Rockford, Ill. Guests include Jim Ward, Tom Wham, and John Olson. Registration: \$5 for one or both days, with no game fees. Write to: ROCK-CON XIX, 14225 Hansberry Rd., Rockton IL 61072.

**URICON '91, Nov. 2****RI**

The University of Rhode Island Gaming Club announces this convention will be held at the Memorial Union in the U. of R.I. campus in Kingston, R.I. Events include D&D®, SHADOWRUN®, and STAR FLEET BATTLES® games. Registration: \$4 general admission, \$3 for URI students before Oct. 19; or \$5 and \$4 thereafter. Write to: Mark Oliver, 87A Ninigret Rd., Narragansett RI 02882.

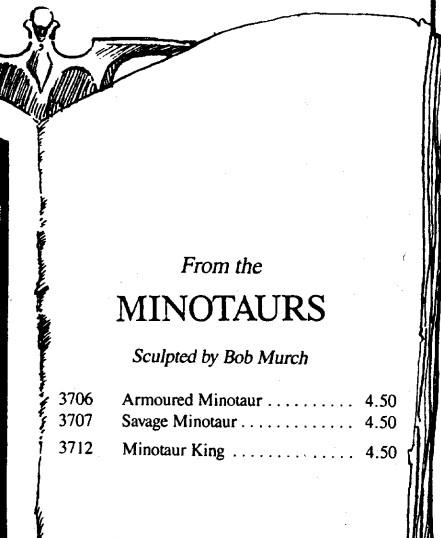
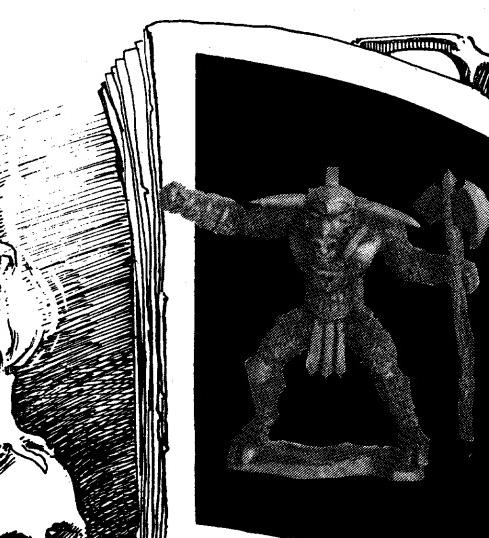
**A.U.G. CON III, Nov. 8-10****NJ**

A. U. Gamers present this convention, to be held at the Sheraton Tara Hotel in Parsippany, N.J. Events include RPGA™ Network events, a charity game, and board games. Other activities include a costume contest, a miniatures-painting contest, and a dealers' room. Prizes will be awarded to the best players and GMs. Registration: \$7/day or \$18/weekend before Oct. 20; \$8/day or \$20/weekend thereafter, and \$10/day at the door. Write to: A.U. Gamers, P.O. Box 218, Flanders NJ 07836.

**GAME FAIR XIV, Nov. 8-10****IL**

Sponsored by the Illinois Central College Game club, this convention will be held at ITOO

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**NEBULOUS CON III, NOV. 8-10** W V

This gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn of Morgantown, W.V. Events include various role-playing and strategic games. Other activities include a murder mystery: Who killed the convention coordinator? Registration: \$13/weekend preregistered, and \$15/weekend, \$4/Friday, and \$7/Saturday or Sunday at the door. Send an SASE to: Nebulous Assoc., PO. Box 925, Morgantown WV 26507-0925.

**SCI CON 13, Nov. 8-10** VA

This SF/gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Virginia Beach, Va. Guests include Lois McMaster Bujold and Vincent DiFate. Events include panels, readings, videos, a costume contest, an art show, a hospitality suite, and gaming. Registration: \$25 at the door. Dealers are welcome. Send an SASE to: SCI CON 13, PO. Box 9434, Hampton VA 23670.

**IMPACT 1.3, Nov. 9** NE

This gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Central in Omaha, Nebr. Events include tabletop and role-playing games. Registration: \$5. Write to: IMPACT, PO. Box 4486, Omaha NE 68104.

**LAGACON 12, Nov. 9** PA

This convention will be held at Kasper's Ark, north of Lebanon, Pa. Events include AD&D®, ASL®, and BATTLETECH® tournaments, with NUKE WAR®, DAYS OF DECISION®, TALISMAN®, RED EMPIRE®, and other introductory games. Vendors will be present. Ask about group discounts. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers' Assoc., 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042; or call: (717) 274-8706 from 5-9 P.M. week nights and 9-9 on Saturdays.

**WATCON '91, Nov. 9-10** \*

Sponsored by WATSFIC, this convention will be held at the University of Waterloo campus in Waterloo, Ontario. Events include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS®, and AFTERMATH® games, plus board and miniatures events. Other activities include panels, seminars, and all types of gaming and prizes. Registration: \$10/day (Canadian) or \$16/weekend preregistered, and \$15/day or \$20/weekend at the door. Write to: WATSFIC, c/o Room 215 (Clubs' Room), Campus Centre, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, CANADA N2L 3G1; or call Ronald at: (519) 884-3842.

**COWBOY CON II, Nov. 15-17** OK

This convention will be held at the OSU Student Union in Stillwater, Okla. Events include AXIS & ALLIES®, PANZER LEADER®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, AD&D®, STAR TREK®, CHAMPIONS®, and WARHAMMER® games. Other activities include a movie room and a dealers' room. Registration: \$2/day or \$5/weekend preregistered; \$3/day or \$6/weekend at the door. Write to: Con Chairman, c/o Cowboy Campaigners Club, 040 Student Union, Box 110, Stillwater OK 74078; or call Wes at: (405) 372-9448.

**U-CON, Nov. 15-17**

**Note:** The site of this convention has been changed. It will now be held at the University of Michigan Union on the U. of M. campus in Ann Arbor, Mich. Events include a wide variety of historical miniatures and strategic games. Registration: \$5/day or \$7/weekend; at-the-door prices slightly higher. Write to: U-CON, PO. Box 4491, Ann Arbor MI 48106-4491.

**MI**

**PENTACON VII, Nov. 16-17**

**IN**

Sponsored by the Northeastern Indiana Gamers' Assoc., this convention will be held at the Grand Wayne Center in downtown Fort Wayne, Ind. Events include an RPGATM AD&D® tournament, the NIGA Spotlight tournament, historical miniatures games, painting and costume contests, door prizes, and a flea market. Registration: \$5/day or \$8/weekend preregistered; or \$6/day or \$10/weekend at the door. Write to: PENTACON, PO. Box 11176, Fort Wayne IN 46856; or call Steve at: (219) 356-4209.

**NUCON '91, Nov. 22-24**

Sponsored by NUGS, this convention will be held at the University of Newcastle, Newcastle, NSW, Australia. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, CYBERPUNK®, SPACE: 1889®, and TOON® games. Registration: \$3 (Australian) per session, for up to eight sessions. Write to: NUGS, 2/16 Upfold St., Mayfield, NSW 2304, AUSTRALIA; or call Rodney at: (0491) 633230 or Matthew at: (049) 676610.

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## FANTASY MINIATURES GAMING IN A DARK CHAOTIC WORLD

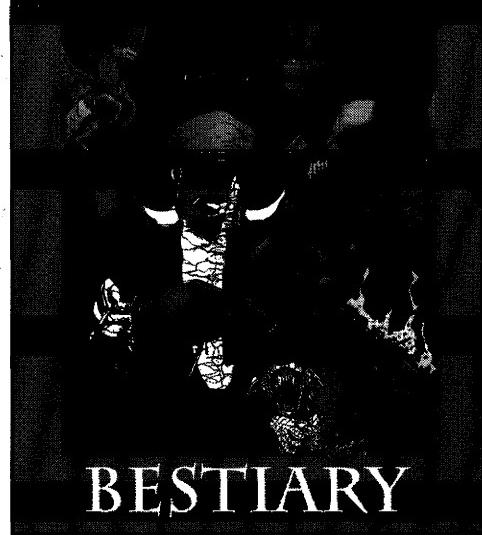


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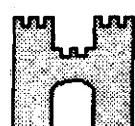
The *Bladestorm Bestiary™* sourcebook is a 96 page creature compendium for the *Bladestorm* miniatures system. It provides complete game statistics and descriptions for over a hundred beasts and monsters, including: Undead, Dragons, Demons, shapechangers, Zephyr Hounds, and many more. Include these new creatures in your own warbands or face them on the field of battle! Inside you also get:

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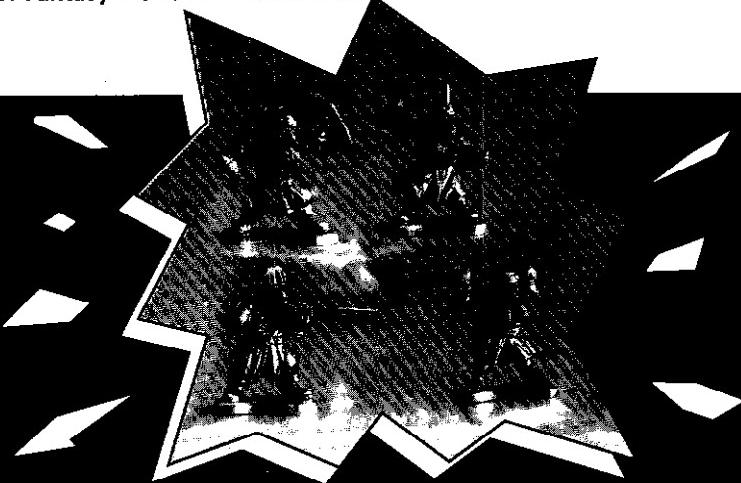
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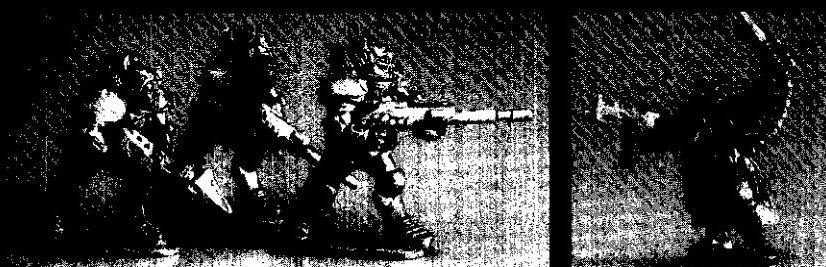
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# Defeating More With Less

Smarter foes are better than tougher foes

by Gregory W. Detwiler

Over the years, there have been so many horror stories of "Monty Haul" gamers slaughtering everything in sight with impunity, and of grossly unbalanced campaigns with high-powered player characters, that it is high time something was done about it. The opposition for an increasingly tough adventuring party does not have to consist of bigger and better foes; it will suffice to have smarter ones.

This article is loosely based on and dedicated to "Tucker's kobolds," immortalized in the editorial of DRAGON® issue #127. In it, readers may recall, a band of adventurers of up to 12th level was badly beaten by ordinary kobolds in their specially fortified and equipped first dungeon level. This article's advice is similarly based in part on little parts of the rules that often are ignored. Unless otherwise stated, all suggestions are based on the rules of the AD&D® 2nd Edition game, although these suggestions work perfectly well with the AD&D 1st Edition game and should be applicable to the D&D® game and many other role-playing systems.

## Guerrillas and missiles

Whether it's because so many fighter characters prefer melee-happy barbarian types or because there are many more magical melee weapons than missile weapons, combat in the AD&D game almost always winds up as a hugger-mugger melee after the spell-casters let fly. This is incredibly wasteful in casualties, especially when good missile weapons are available. Killing at a distance is not only safer for the killer, it also helps even the odds between high- and low-level characters.

In the AD&D 2nd Edition game rules, fighter types may make more missile as well as melee attacks per round as they advance in levels. Due to the nature of missile combat, however, this does not always give them the same overwhelming advantage that may be possessed by a fighter carving his way through a kobold horde. In melee combat, a fighter's foes are face-to-face with him, with no chance to avoid his blows if their armor fails. With ranged combat, the enemy has a chance to escape injury or death by em-

ploying cover and concealment. Look at the cover and concealment modifiers of Table 44 on page 62 of the 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and Table 59 on page 99 in the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*. If an enemy has 25% concealment, that is sufficient to nullify the advantage of weapon specialization in a missile weapon other than a bow or crossbow; with 25% cover, he can nullify the point-blank range bonuses of specialization in bows and crossbows. Reducing the foe's chance of hitting your PC with each attack means he will take longer to kill your PC, thus balancing out his ability to make multiple attacks per round.

Superior numbers can go hand in hand with the concealment or cover advantage to help cut the fighter down to size. In

melee combat, a high-level fighter can slice his way through kobolds in no time. In an archery duel against multiple foes under cover, the odds are all in favor of the more numerous little guys. To be sure, low-level enemies have a lesser chance of hitting the fighter, but the advantage of cover gives each one more time to try, and multiple attackers mean more chances of someone eventually scoring a hit. Also, using a bow or other missile weapon properly requires concentration, much as spell-casting does. If a fighter gets hit right before he is about to fire a shot of his own, there should be a 50% chance that he will automatically miss—the fighting equivalent of a miscast spell. With many attacks coming from all sides of him, our fighter might be too distracted to concentrate on any one tar-



Artwork by L.A. Williams

get. Don't forget the possibility of a wounded foe "playing possum," then attacking again when the fighter's attention turns elsewhere. This can work well in melee combat, too.

Guerrilla warfare and missile weapons mix well. Sniper attacks are always at their best when the sniper is under cover, and killing at a distance fits in well with the guerrilla's philosophy of using hit-and-run tactics. Guerrillas closing in for melee might have trouble disengaging to flee if the foe is tougher than they bargained for, and you can't tell what level a character is just by looking at him. With bows and slings, the situation is different: The archer or slinger stays far away and under cover, the only indication of his presence being the occasional missile streaking out to wound or kill. It's especially easy for a guerrilla in an ancient or medieval world; bows make far less noise than guns, so sound alone will not help the victim locate his tormentor. Most importantly, in the AD&D game, most fighters choose melee weapons over bows and the like, and most DMs lean toward melee weapons when passing out magical weaponry. Even a sword +5 is useless if you can't get close enough to the opponent to use it.

Acid and burning oil are also highly useful. "Noncombatant" women and children can use them in battle with as much success as warriors would (how many

fighters have weapons specialization in grenadelike missiles?), thereby freeing the fighters for other duty. This is also quite realistic for an ancient or medieval world. In ancient history, the women of a besieged city often assisted the defenders by hurling things down on storming parties.

Weapons specialization in grenadelike missiles is a new skill introduced in this article. Someone who specializes in throwing such things has an extra 10' added to the usual range of missiles of all sizes (short range for a five-pound or lighter grenade becomes 20' instead of only 10', etc.), due to the extra practice and the muscular strength built up when performing just such actions. There is also an increased chance of a direct hit, because the container has a greater chance of breaking. Assume the thrower knows how to put the right amount of "spin" on a thrown object to increase the chances of its breaking (i.e., failing to save vs. crushing blow). When an expert throws containers, the chances of tough containers failing to save are given a -2 to their saving throws vs. crushing blow (see Table 29 on page 39 of the DMG). Not many PCs will use this skill, but it's ideal for beefing up NPCs.

It's not just a question of direct damage, either. The temporary trauma of being hit with a grenadelike missile (assuming the contents are harmful) is so great that the target is temporarily unable to do anything for the next round. On pages 93 in the PHB and page 54 of the DMG, look at the heading, "What You Can Do in One Round." Even a momentary distraction of a PC's attention can be all it takes for a wounded foe to get under cover or out of range, or for a mage PC to be jumped before he can cast a spell. If the grenade's contents are oily, which can cling to the target, you might even increase the helplessness duration by another round or two, until the stuff either flows off, burns off, or evaporates.

Burning oil is an especially valuable weapon, because it can start fires on flammable materials on and around the victim, causing more damage than was done by the attack itself. In the "Tucker's kobolds" story, you will recall, the corridor was filled with flammable material that the kobolds set ablaze. (Actually, Tucker wasn't as hard on the group as he could have been. If the kobolds had merely sealed up all openings to the corridor instead of taking potshots at the party, the adventurers would have suffocated en masse as the flames ate up all the oxygen. Not a particularly heroic way to die, but kobolds can't afford chivalry.)

Although this intrudes on the "Traps" section, it is a good illustration of the value of burning oil. At an ambush point in a dungeon, stepping on the trigger causes the ceiling to open up. Instead of the standard 10-ton block of stone, however, a mass of dry, flammable material such as paper, cotton, or dead leaves falls on the

victim, in such quantities that he is either buried and unable to move, or is reduced to slowly slogging through the mess (50% chance of either happening). Struggling out from under this mess might involve use of the breath-holding rules, possibly with suffocation following (see page 122 of the PHB), while slogging through a pile of tinder would be similar to moving through soft sand or snow (check page 124 of the DMG). After the stuff falls, a pot of burning oil is poured over the mass of tinder from a murder hole in the ceiling, the tinder catches fire, and the victim takes 1d6 hp burning damage per round until such time as he can slog into the clear. (The fire is assumed to have a ventilation source to keep it burning, such as small holes in the ceiling or walls.) If the PC is actually buried in the mess, the flames will either harm comrades coming to the rescue or deter them from making any rescue attempts, leading to more damage or even death for the victim. Remember that it is easier to pile tinder into a ceiling trap than to maneuver a 10-ton block of stone into position.

### Traps

This section isn't about new and hideous ways to kill characters—at least, not directly. Instead, it details how nonlethal traps can add to the killing process.

You've all heard of the confining trap; now, you'll hear of the truly confining trap. The victim blunders into a pit trap (roll his dexterity or less on 1d20, or he falls in), to discover it is shaped like a funnel, with the narrow end at the bottom. This point is so narrow that the victim will barely fit it, and will be so cramped that he will be quite unable to get out again without assistance. Now imagine a murder hole directly above the funnel-shaped pit, where an enemy can shoot arrows or bolts down on the motionless character, scoring a hit virtually every time. If missile firing seems too tedious, assume the murder hole opens into a larger chamber, with barrel upon barrel of ghastly liquid. A few barrels full of burning oil or acid, poured down on an immobile character, will make a mockery of the advantage of high level. The fellow may have lots of hit points, but if he can't fight back, his assailant has all the time in the world to leisurely get rid of him.

Cramped pits aren't the only traps that can hold a character helpless for the kill. A snare that pins the adventurer's arms to his sides or leaves him dangling in the air by one foot is also deadly when backed up by armed guards. Nets and jaw traps that confine limbs are also good, though strong characters might be able to break free (use the bend bars/lift gates skill to determine success).

Then there's the unstable footing gambit, in which foes decoy adventurers onto a surface of ice, oil, grease, deep snow or mud, or even quicksand. Use Table 73 on page 124 of the DMG to determine move-

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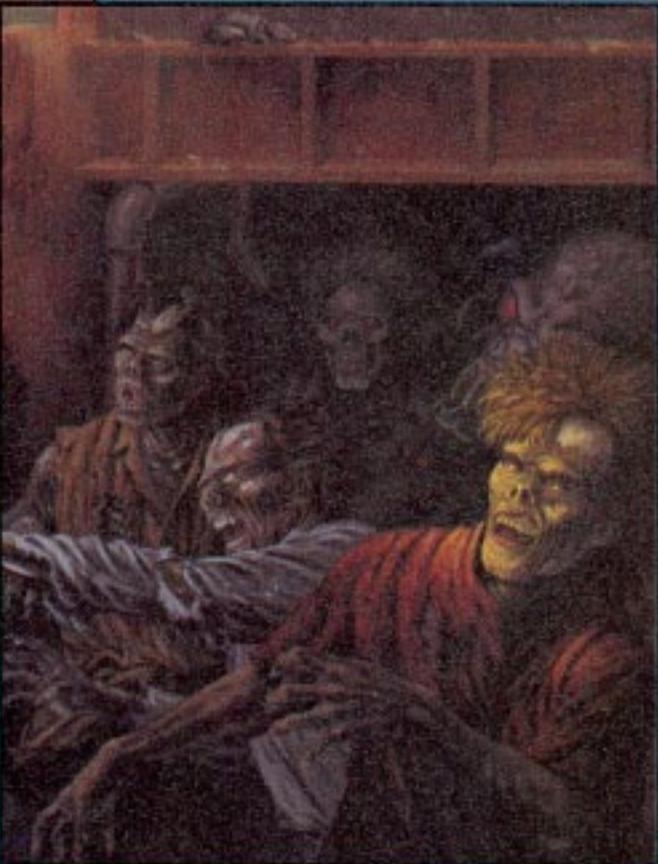
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ment difficulties for all but the last. Quicksand is a death trap where the victim cannot move at all without causing himself to sink (unless he knows enough to swim or float), after which it will be the same as drowning in water. If the character is heavily armored, almost nothing can save him.

When slipping about or mired in some goop, characters will be unable to fight effectively. And without free movement, characters get no dexterity bonuses on armor class; spell-casters become more or less useless (more on that later). If a fighter cannot shift into position to use his shield, that hurts, too. Even ordinary combatants can become lethal foes if the high-level heroes can't fight back.

### Unseen assailants

This section concerns itself with the advantage of making sudden attacks that the victims are unaware of until it's too late. The reason this isn't in the guerrilla-warfare section is because it concentrates on unnatural stealth.

*Invisibility* is a fact of life in the AD&D game, and a fatal one under the right circumstances. The spell is only a 2nd-level one, thereby fitting in well with backing up low-level opponents. It is true that the *invisibility* spell is nullified when one makes an attack, but by that time, it is generally too late for the victim. Anyone backstabbed by a thief (or assassin in the

AD&D 1st Edition game) knows how lethal a surprise attack from the rear can be; *invisibility* can get a foe in position for just such an attack. Think of a party clustered together, suddenly surprised by a wizard who pops into view just long enough to shoot a *fireball* from his wand. Take the thief who wades right into a pile of coins and gems, dispelling too late the *invisibility* spell cast on the black pudding right before him (illusions would work just as well in cases like this). If a variation of this spell is cast on a door or section of wall, it might even cause a hurrying character to bash his brains out when he tries to spring through the "gap." Used properly, *invisibility* can be a real killer.

Low-level illusion spells are good, too, if properly used. For trapping PCs in a cavern complex or dungeon, wait until they are out of sight (but not hearing), then create the audible illusion of a cave-in, immediately following it up with the illusion of a pile of debris sealing off the entrance. Showmanship counts. So do special effects used to simulate realism. If the party can be observed advancing down a tunnel, a 1st-level illusionist can get advance warning to create a *phantasmal force* illusion of a stone or clay golem. This illusion is totally silent, but the spell-caster's confederates hiding and watching in the background can solve that problem by scraping a rock or piece of broken

pottery across the floor each time the "golem" sets a foot down. In an echoing tunnel, it could well be impossible to determine precisely where the sound is coming from.

In a town or city setting, *change self* can enable a character's hated enemy to sneak up behind him unnoticed for a sudden backstabbing attack, just as *invisibility* could. A shallow pit can seem incredibly deep if an audible illusion cast right before the party shows up makes it seem as if someone fell in, particularly if the "victim's" final screams are drawn out and steadily diminishing in volume. After that, who's going to bother tossing in a torch to determine the pit's depth? Then there are illusory bridges over rivers, illusory reefs to keep an enemy ship from coming in close to shore, and so on. To even the odds, use illusions—and your wits.

### Drag 'em down!

This topic is similar to that of confining traps, save for the fact that it concerns attacks by living opponents that confine the victim, rather than the use of inanimate traps.

Check out "Attacking Without Killing," in the PHB and the DMG, on pages 97 and 59 respectively. This concerns grappling and overbearing attacks, among others, which can result in a character being pinned down and helpless. The victim's foes can



then either take him prisoner or kill him at their leisure, and neither the text nor the charts say a darn thing about the victim's levels.

It's a common tactic of DMs to have low-level humanoids attack in superior numbers to offset individual inferiority. However, they always wind up fighting with weapons, enabling the more-powerful characters to knock them off easily. Why not have the humanoids even the odds by charging bare-handed, to throw themselves on the fighters, and drag them down in an overbearing attack? Sure, they'll take some casualties of their own, but bold warriors have to expect that sort of thing in battle. Assume they're worked up into a battle frenzy, are drugged or drunk, have a spell cast on them, or are just plain desperate. A fighter's strength does not increase as he gains levels; it won't increase at all unless he gets his hands on something like *gauntlets of ogre power*. If the DM is properly stingy concerning magical treasure, then this option is lost to the character.

There is no question that being held immobile is a serious problem for any character. Weapons cannot be wielded, shields cannot be shifted into position, and you can kiss dexterity-based armor-class additions goodbye. Spell-casters are also helpless when denied free movement. Theoretically, a psionics-using character

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(the psionicist class in the AD&D 2nd Edition game) would be able to get in a *psionic blast* or other attack, since all he uses is his mind, but if his captors knock him around constantly to keep him from concentrating, even this might be useless (of course, the moment they stop, the psionicist can act). Note that evil creatures tend to knock prisoners around for the hell of it; they don't have to suspect a character has psionics to do this.

If you want to teach PCs a lesson about overconfidence, but don't want to kill them (at least not right away), then grappling and overbearing tactics are ideal. This way, they can be taken prisoner, possibly to be released upon a ransom payment (reducing their monetary wealth) if they haven't escaped. If the idiots still haven't learned their lesson, then go ahead and have their captors kill them for sport, sacrifice, or food. Again, this is a tactic that can improve the chances for role-playing, as imprisoned characters can't help but interact with their captors and any fellow prisoners (with benevolent foes, friends, and relatives maybe getting visiting rights).

### Sabotage

One problem many DMs encounter involves PCs throwing their weight around in public among the common, low-level NPCs who can't defend themselves in combat.

This subject has already been addressed a number of times in DRAGON Magazine, but I'll recap one of the remedies for those newer readers who tuned in late, as these can have a powerful effect on the adventurers. [In particular, see the comments on party sabotage in "Revenge of the Nobodies," from DRAGON issue #112.]

Player characters do not exist in a vacuum. They are dependent on others for all the little things in life: food, drink, clothing, shelter, nonmagical gear, some material spell components, pack animals—that sort of thing. And this is where those poor, hapless NPC nobodies can take revenge. The sabotage of a character's (or party's) gear can bring about disaster at the critical point in the adventure.

Cavaliers (the class or kit, depending on the edition of AD&D games you play) should be the most frequent victims, if any logic applies; a properly played cavalier would antagonize everyone whose blood is not true blue. In between threats and insults, the local horse dealer will assure His Lordship that this heavy war horse will not flee in terror when he encounters a dragon. True enough: The poor thing will be so frightened that it will freeze from terror, leaving His Lordship cursing and twitching in the saddle, probably making a fool of himself as the dragon approaches. To a lesser degree, any character can have trouble with locally bought

beasts. Of course these horses are "well-broken"; they got that name because their riders all wound up that way.

Armurers, weaponsmiths, weavers, and the like have great potential for sabotage. A fighter's blade could break when it strikes a foe or parries a blow; a shield could shatter when struck, and armor may reveal weak spots at the most inconvenient times. Being three-quarters of the way up your world's version of Mount Everest is a poor time for the party's rope to break, especially from the point of view of those characters hanging on under the breaking point. Saddle girths can snap and horseshoes can be thrown, really screwing up a cavalry charge. A worker who really knows his business will know how much normal wear a certain damaged strap can take, doing just enough damage to it so that the saddle girth will snap at roughly the time the cavalier reaches the caves to challenge that huge ancient red dragon in mortal combat. Then there are boats that spring leaks in mid-ocean, clothes that wear out or split their seams prematurely while the characters are out in the icy wilderness, lockpicks and other thieves' tools that are just a bit too thick to fit in keyholes, and containers that develop holes sometime after they are filled to capacity (usually on the trek to or from the party's destination, so as to lose vital gear, supplies, or treasure). Assign a

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10-50% chance of a doctored item breaking, depending on the worker's skill. Remember, it can't be too noticeable, or the owner will catch on too soon.

Sabotage of spell components can be most disastrous to the party. Suppose the sulphur or saltpeter had been specially treated with impurities mixed in, thus nullifying the metaphysical qualities inherent in these substances. Maybe the treacherous supplier substituted the droppings of other animals for bat guano, even going so far as to dye the stuff to make it look like bat guano. Spell components made of gold, silver, or platinum could have base metals worked into them in sufficient quantity to ruin the dweomer expected, and fake gemstones (whole or powdered) will not give the required results. From midlevel adventures on, depriving a party of its magical punch can mean the difference between survival (never mind victory) and disaster.

The standard way to handle the effects of sabotaged spell components is to simply have the spell fail. With imagination, however, the DM can come up with much more interesting results. Information-gathering spells can give the wrong results, causing the party to walk into a trap rather than avoid one. An offensive spell could affect the caster or another party member (an area-effect attack spell like *fireball* might hit the whole party, with the mage serving as "ground zero"). A defensive spell like *anti-magic shell* or *protection from normal missiles* could be bestowed—not on the party, but on the enemy. (A lycanthrope of any sort would not need *protection from normal missiles*.) For single defensive spells like *invisibility*, bestow it on the nearest attacking creature that can use it. If you don't want such drastic results to even the odds, simply reduce the range, duration, or damage caused by the miscast spell. [See also "*Variety, the Spice of Magic*" in issue #147, and "*Magic Mangling Made Easy*," in issue #173, for further spell-sabotage possibilities.]

If you don't care much for intrigue in your campaign, or the PCs are too powerful but haven't been nasty enough to encourage sabotage, then you have a simple substitute: incompetence. The master smith or armorer might have a flood of orders, and simply turns a certain number of jobs over to his apprentice. Likewise, some people might not be able to honestly tell the difference between real and fake gemstones, or they might be poor animal trainers. And as for spell components—well, can you tell the difference between bat guano and buffalo chips? Even with local intrigue, this can be useful. A spy or refugee posing as a specialized workman might be forced to "fake it" or else blow his cover. Characters who have had a number of unpleasant experiences with their gear will (if they survive) learn to shop around and inquire as to the relative skills of the various specialists, thereby getting more involved in role-playing and negotiation.



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## Nuisance encounters

By nuisance encounters, I am not speaking of run-ins with bandits or wandering monsters. I am referring to encounters with creatures so small and weak that they usually don't appear in monster listings. This does not, however, mean that they can't cause trouble.

Monkeys, ordinary pack rats, and ordinary ravens aren't much of a threat in battle, even to 1st-level characters. However, they do possess an annoying habit of grabbing any objects that strike their fancy and making off with them. Such items are usually small and shiny: gems, jewelry, and metallic items such as rings. If you want to save time when making up a treasure cache by simply putting in a few bits of jewelry and magical items, make the party's return trip more interesting by having a small, cute, furry or feathered creature make off with one or more small but precious items. While this wouldn't make more than a dent in a large horde, it would be a major proportion of a small one, and hence more worth the PCs' time to recover. Even if it is nonmagical, a gemstone or piece of jewelry might still be worth more than all the rest of the trea-

sure put together.

Magical-item theft is best, of course. Let's say a monkey has taken a strong liking to a PC's *jewel of flawlessness*, *gem of seeing*, or *ring of three wishes*. If it climbs up a tree with its loot, the PC naturally has to climb up after it to get the item back. The monkey has the advantage, though: It's much lighter than the PC is, even if the PC is stripped down for the climb (did he remember to take off his armor before climbing?), and thus the monkey can go higher and travel on thinner branches. Press the pursuit too far, and the player will soon be engaged in a heated debate with the DM about falling damage.

Magic is surprisingly ineffective in this situation. *Fly* or *levitate* will get the PC up there, but in the thick foliage and dense branches, the monkey still has the advantage, and this ability won't wear off like the spell will. *Spider climb* seems to even the odds, but there's still that matter of narrow limbs; again, a spell will eventually wear off. Ditto for the various *polymorph* spells. Besides, if the PC turns into a monkey to face the beast on equal terms, remember that it will be equal terms. The

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PC won't be any tougher than the monkey, and spell-casting is out of the question, so there's no guarantee that the PC will be able to beat the monkey and recover his property.

If the PC wants to zap the monkey from the ground, fine, but if he wants to do it without hurting the stolen goods, that's not so fine. If the monkey's hiding in the thick foliage so the PC can't tell exactly where it is, this prohibits precision-demanding spell like *magic missile*. Area-effect spells would be necessary, but most of these, such as *fireball*, would risk damaging the stolen magical item. The player would have to use something like *sleep*, *death spell*, or *power word stun* to take out a thief that could have as little as 1 hp. And if the PC is out in the wilderness, which is presumably full of wild beasts and monsters, he might not dare use such a powerful spell on one lousy monkey (another good reason not to use any *shape change* spells). Don't forget saving throws, either. This is a great option for DMs who like to use wandering monsters to deplete a party's spell powers: Why conjure up more dragons than the neighborhood could support when a 1 hp monkey will do just fine?

If you're a DM and are feeling really sadistic, force the PCs to watch helplessly from the ground while the monkey uses up their hard-won *wishes* on such things as a lifetime supply of bananas (if you don't think a monkey could use the magic, remember that animals *must* be able to come up with at least some humanlike concepts, or the *speak with animals* spell would be useless). Trickery or diplomacy (assuming a character can *speak with animals*) is at a premium here, as this is a situation where the use of brute force is clearly out of the question.

You can also have a scenario where the small animal is to be killed for some special reason. Perhaps it's the spying familiar of a nosy wizard, or a scout for the local druid. Or maybe the PCs are just desperate for food. Beating the bushes in search of small animals such as rabbits can be a real pain, and any spells used on those animals should be of a type that leaves something behind to eat. In an area where game is really scarce, only one or two small animals might be available to be caught, with the main fighting being among the party members as they decide who gets to eat what food there is.

In a way, this sort of nuisance encounter is an extrapolation of guerrilla warfare, with stealth and speed taking the place of brute force. At any rate, small animals should be far more common than human or humanoid opponents in most worlds, so adjust your encounter tables accordingly.

In summary, DMs should remember that not all counters to powerful magic and abilities are equally powerful magic and abilities. Stealth, speed, trickery, weight of numbers, and missile fire, perhaps with a



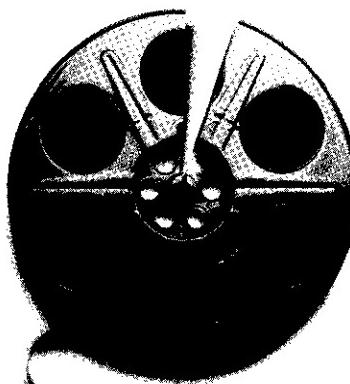
*I have died of untold fear  
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but my secret is safe—  
for now*

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touch of magical enhancement, can even the odds up wonderfully. Best of all, since the counter to the PCs' might has no mass of hit points or magical items, the PCs will not gain any great game balance-destroying advantages if they manage to

triumph anyway. In such a victory, the PCs will definitely have earned their experience points. It should teach them that even in magical universes, bigger is not always better. Ω



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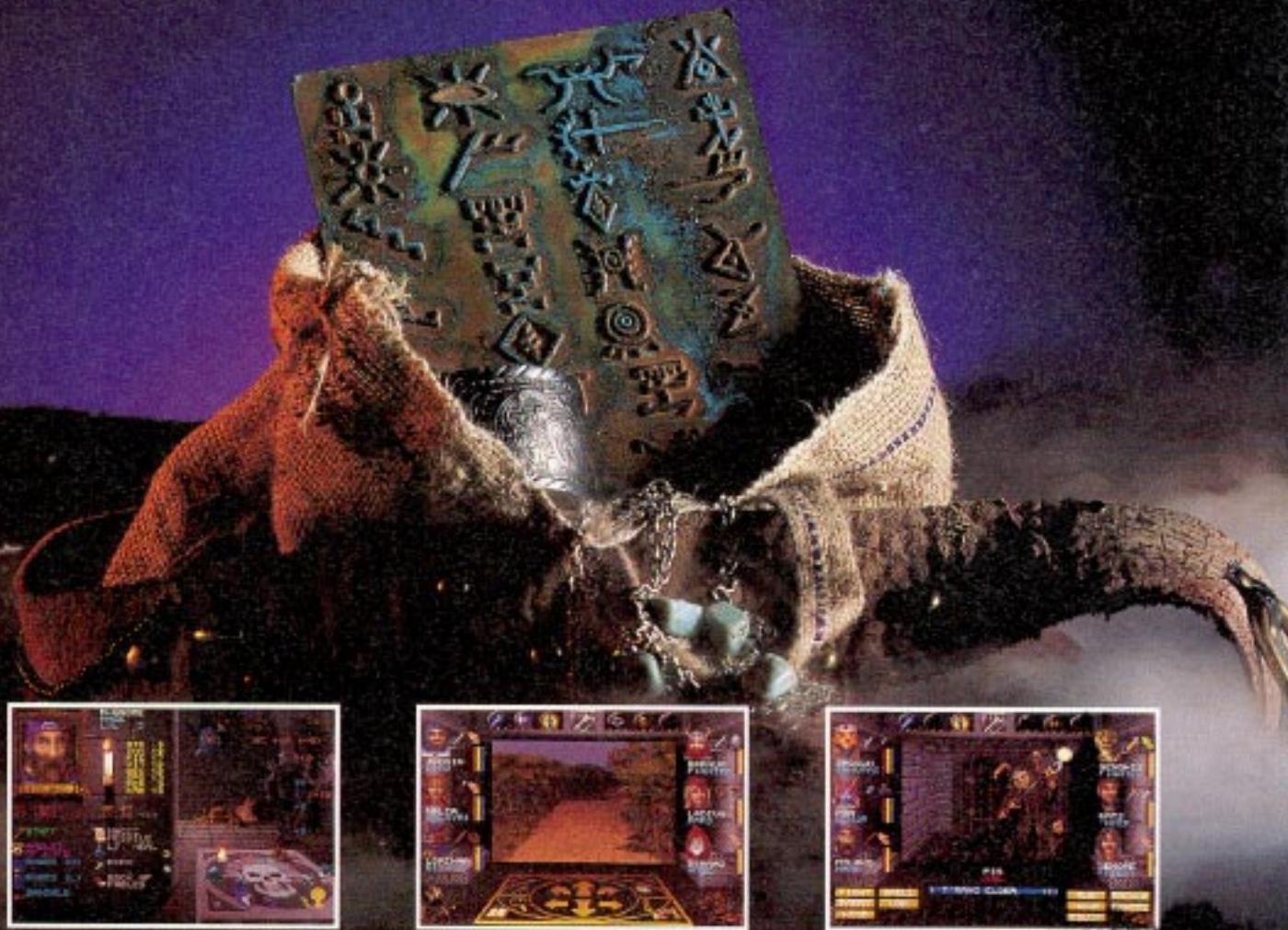
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# BAZAAR OF the BIZARRE

by Matthew P. Hargenrader

## *Ioun stones: Where do you go if you want some more?*

Some of the most interesting treasures found in the AD&D® game are those wonderful floating gems called *ioun stones*. These small, glittering stones are highly prized by adventurers, for they grant their users many special benefits, such as protection from magical spells, amplification of ability scores, or even an entire level of experience. But some game areas pertaining to these gems are not well described. Where do they come from? Are these magical gemstones created naturally or artificially? How can they achieve such spectacular results? This article answers these questions and sheds more light on these nifty little treasures.

So, where do *ioun stones* come from? The power contained within these magical crystals is tremendous, enabling them to produce effects far beyond the apparent scope of normal AD&D game magic. Just imagine the power required to give a stone the dweomer to raise a character's standard abilities by one point. Creating this effect using regular AD&D spells requires a wish (a ninth-level spell, from a spell-caster of at least 18th level). And a wish is capable of raising exceptional scores of 16 and above by only one-tenth of a point! Regardless, not even a wish is powerful enough to raise a character's level of experience. *Ioun stones* can achieve these effects instantly. Keeping in mind that such enhancements are temporary, effective only while the gem is in use, we find that ability scores and levels above

racial maximums can be obtained.<sup>1</sup> Where do the stones obtain such power?

This article describes several possible methods by which *ioun stones* might be created. It draws most of the pertinent information directly from the AD&D rules, the bulk of research concentrated mainly within the AD&D 1st Edition hardback, *The Manual of the Planes*. But I did not ignore the true source of the stones, so before we begin our investigation, let's give credit to the inventor of these fascinating magical treasures.

The idea and name for the *ioun stone* originally appeared in a series of books written by Jack Vance. Collectively, these works are referred to as the Dying Earth novels. They include: *The Dying Earth*, *Eyes of the Overworld*, *Cugel's Saga*, and *Rhialto the Marvelous*. A related novel using the same setting and characters was written by Michael Shea, titled *A Quest for Simbilis*. I highly recommend these books as inspirational sources.

All of these works contain ideas that have been incorporated into the AD&D books, such as the wizard's spell memorization system. In one of the newest novels, *Rhialto the Marvelous*, can be found a detailed description of where *ioun stones* originate, including the method in which they can be collected. All of this information is contained within the short story, "Morreion."

This tale reveals that these magically enhanced gemstones are created naturally,

deep inside the hearts of stars, being found in abundance within burned-out stars. These stellar husks possess immense gravitational fields, protecting the stones they contain. As these stars penetrate the leading edge of the expanding universe, they encounter a barrier, known as the "nothing." Collision with the barrier causes the star to vanish, layer by layer, gradually exposing the glittering cargo that is hidden within the core. Here lie the *ioun stones*, nestled in pockets of black dust on a vast glistening plane that is known as the "shining-fields."

The now-revealed gems are then collected, at great risk, by a race of blue-scaled, demonlike creatures, the archveults. Harvesting is achieved by hovering above the star's vanishing surface, safely suspended on specially made rafts called slideboards that protect them from crushing gravity. From these platforms, the archveults greedily remove the stones from the surrounding loose material. Using arcane and physical means, and being careful to remain within the dust area (stepping outside of the dust is instant death), the archveults quickly gather the gems. Remaining overlong on the surface is risking deadly contact with the "nothing," a horrifying death as the victim slowly vanishes.

The underlying theme through all of these novels is the fact that stones are of enormous magical value. These gems are the most highly prized and jealously guarded magicks that a wizard owns.



Artwork by Kevin Davies

Some of these wizards, notably Morreion, possessed a veritable cloud of stones that followed them about at all times. The tales are marvelously crafted, and I tried to remain as true as possible to their intent while developing my theory. I also took into consideration staying within the confines of the AD&D rules.

*[It would be very simple to convert the above story line to fit with the AD&D 2nd Edition SPELLJAMMER™ supplement. The archevults would be the arcane, who would harvest the stones from fire bodies and elmarin (mentioned in the Lorebook of the Void). The gnomes are already said to hunt the elmarin for their ioun stones, which are found when these creatures die. — The editors]*

A non-Vancian method by which *ioun stones* could be created follows. This method lacks any spirit of adventure and is very straightforward: It is supposed that ultrapowerful wizards who live on some alternate Prime Material plane simply make these magical gems. The only interesting thing about this origin is that the magical effects created by such wizards are greatly superior to those encountered in a standard AD&D campaign. In fact, some alternate Prime Material planes allow for vastly superior spell potential that is enhanced to the eleventh level—a full two levels above such paltry spells available in other dimensions, minor enchantments like the ninth-level spell, *wish!*<sup>12</sup>

What a spell of this magnitude could do, I will not venture to guess, but I believe it could easily aid in the manufacturing of many magical items—including *ioun stones*. This method works well and lies within the spirit of AD&D rules, but it is also very simplistic. The only fun involved would be in the journey to this alternate plane (and surviving the wizards' wrath if you steal from them).

*[Interestingly, according to the AD&D 2nd Edition Dungeon Master's Guide, ioun stones have low experience-point values of 300 XP per stone, implying that they can be created by player-character wizards with some ease (since experience points are gained only for creating an item, as per the DMG, page 135). No method for making the stones is given, however. Perhaps the low value can be justified by allowing it to be earned if the character personally collects them from an elmarin and performs whatever brief rituals, if any, are required to bring them to full power; thus, the stones are not truly "created" so much as they are harvested.—The editors]*

However, I prefer a more natural (and dangerous) explanation of the stones' origin. While reading through the *Manual of the Planes*, I discovered a realm that possessed all those qualities.

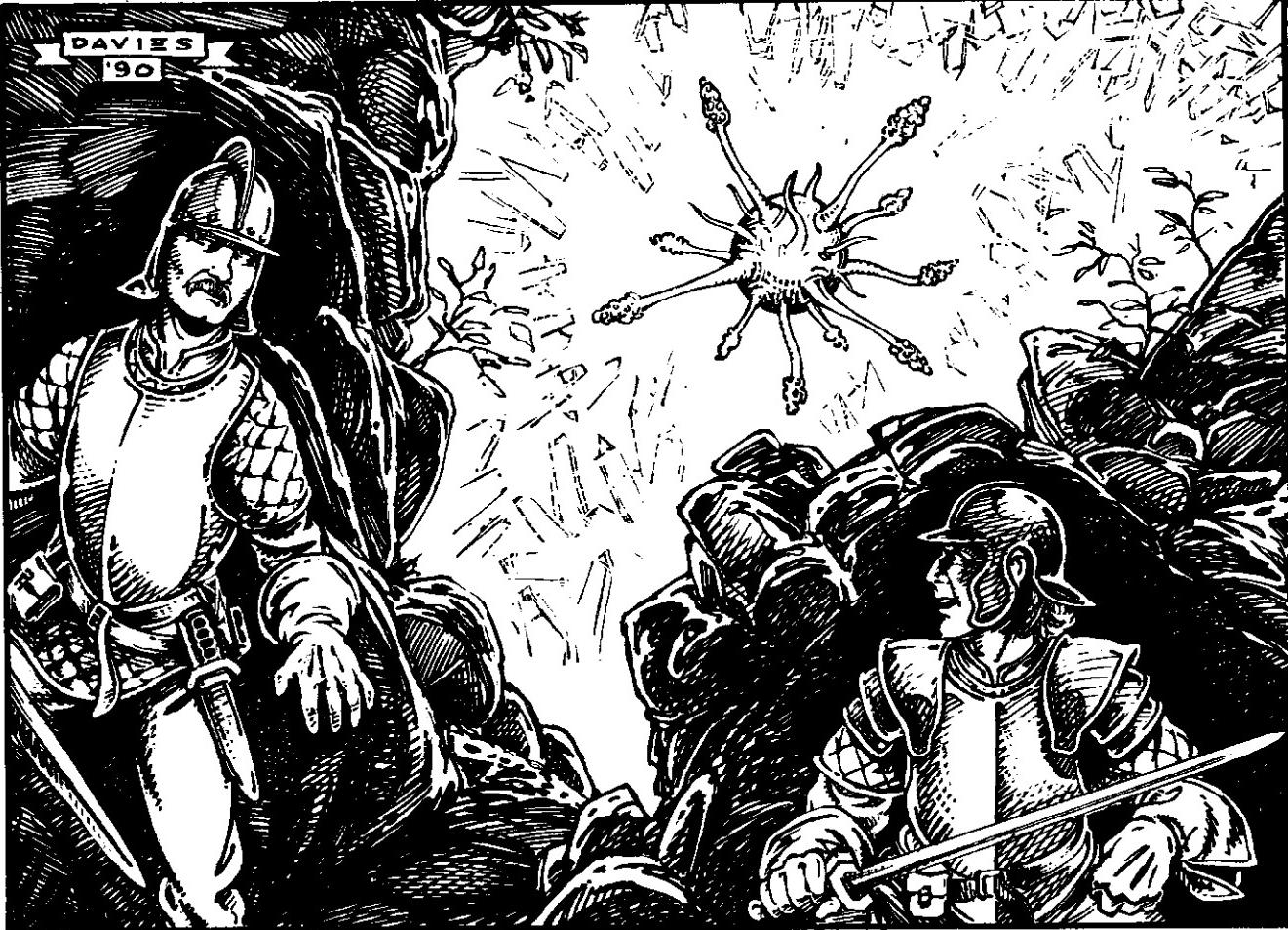
Within the complex interaction of the Inner planes is one great expanse of infinite power: the Positive Material plane. This vast, dynamic plane creates effects

that approach, if not exceed, those of a star.<sup>3</sup> A great pool of energy, this plane interacts with all of the elemental planes to create four quasi-elemental planes. Between this pool of energy and the elemental plane of Earth lies the object of our investigation, the quasi-plane of Mineral. This realm is a vast expanse of rare crystals and rich metal-bearing ore.

Here, the adventurous traveler will discover the secrets of *ioun stones*. These gemstones are valued above all else by the inhabitants of this plane and are especially cherished by Crystalle, the One of Many Facets, the quasi-elemental Prince of Minerals. The stones are jealously guarded and are only rarely given freely to outsiders. Those wishing to obtain these gems must be willing to risk their lives in order to obtain these gems by stealth, outwitting any guardians lurking nearby.

Little is known concerning the quasi-elemental plane of Mineral, but some important basic information does exist. First, any traveler must be well prepared to face the rigors of this plane. This includes readying the correct equipment, appropriate spells, and those magical items that are absolutely necessary to allow breathing, vision and movement through the realm of Mineral (*see the Manual of the Planes*, pages 42-43 for details on traveling through the plane of Earth).

Second, crystals found throughout the Mineral plane are "sharper than steel blades," causing damage to most nonnative



creatures moving through these keen-edged clusters (*Manual of the Planes*, page 56). It is the extreme hardness these crystals possess that gives credence to the theory that *ioun stones* are created within this realm. All *ioun stones* are extremely tough, treated as hard metal + 3 on saving throws, and have AC -4 against physical attacks, possessing 10 hp before being destroyed.

Third, the closer an adventurer gets to the Mineral plane's Positive Material boundary, the more fragile the crystals become and the more these crystals glow with energy, giving off an inner light. Here, in this dangerous border zone, a prospector has the greatest success locating the nodes that may contain a cluster of *ioun stones*. These nodes are large, some of them a yard across. They are huge, unidentifiable, malformed crystals of little value. Nestled within each of these nodes can be found 1d10 *ioun stones*, caught in a crystalline web. Each stone in a given node has a different power; when their powers are rolled for, any duplicates are gray and lifeless.

What causes these nodes to form and how the crystals inside are imbued with their unique powers is not completely understood. Several theories exist, but only one seems to answer most of the questions that arise. It is believed that at times a gem or gems of exceptional quality will form within an elemental pocket (plane of Earth). Surrounded by a layer of inert material, this mass is subjected to the great pressure and force created by the

interaction of the Positive Material and Earth planes. Slowly, this clump is transformed into a proto-geode.

Because of the shifting actions of the planes, these nodules are slowly pushed through the Mineral plane toward the Positive Material plane. The closer this node gets to the vast energy source, the more energy it begins to absorb. Like a battery, the central crystal mass begins to charge itself.

The pseudocrystal shell of the nodule has the amazing property of being semi-permeable. That is, it allows the energy to penetrate, but traps it inside to bathe the nodule's crystalline cargo in an ever-increasing concentration of energy. The highly charged gemstones trapped inside undergo an amazing transformation. Each begins to alter its shape as it absorbs a different frequency of energy. By the time the *ioun stones* are ready for use, they are readily identifiable by type, as each energy band makes only one type of stone.

Also during this time, the stones, which exist in a zero-gravity realm, begin to build up a field of pseudomagnetic repulsion. The stones also begin to lose up to one-half their physical weight, replacing it with pure energy. Despite this weight loss, the stones still maintain their extreme hardness. These two effects together give the stone the capability of "floating in air" once it is freed from its cocoon. But before it can be collected, the stone must be subjected to one more event: total immersion in the Positive Material plane.

After years or centuries of travel, the

nodules reach the fluctuating border between the two planes. Here they face their "test of fire," as wave after wave of totally pure, positive energy washes over them. Half of all nodules are destroyed at this point, as the shell ruptures, spewing its contents into the consuming power. Those nodules that do survive undergo an amazing alteration, as the outer shell is transformed into true material of the Mineral realm. These crystal geodes are carried along at the front edge of an advancing energy wall, where they are deposited within the Positive Material plane.

This final stage may occur many times due to the constant pulsing of the Positive Material plane, and each time vast amounts of raw, dynamic power penetrates the outer shell. Each time this happens, the crystals within are further altered. Very rarely (1% chance per geode), a geode is found in which an *ioun stone* has absorbed a superdosage of energy. Such stones work at double their normal effectiveness. Anytime after the first positive "submersion," the geode is ready for collection by some powerful (or crazy) individual.

The most frequently used location of gathering is from the safety of the great, lead towers that protrude along the border between the Positive Material and Mineral planes. These towers, which extend deep into the Positive Material plane, are totally unaffected by the disintegrating power of the energy. Within a few of these bastions live beings of immense power, such as spellcasters of 18th level or higher, powerful

## New *Ioun Stones* Table

1d100 Color of stone	Shape	Effect
1 Clear	Sphere	Grants 5% magic resistance (25% max. from five such stones)
2 Pure white	Octahedron	+ 1 bonus to charisma vs. beings of the same race
3 Silvery mirror	Cube	Adds + 1 on saves vs. gaze-type petrification attacks (medusa, basilisk, etc.)
4 Deep purple	Prism	Grants infravision capabilities (60' range), or doubles existing infravision range
5 Bright silver	Cylinder	User and 200 lbs. of possessions can go <i>ethereal</i> for a one-hour duration*
6 Soft black	Rectangle	Protection vs. life-level (hit-die) draining attacks (vampire, specter, <i>energy drain</i> , etc.) *
7 Bright white	Rectangle	Adds + 1 to all saving throws vs. acids
8 Deep black	Sphere	Allows user to see in magical <i>darkness</i> (30' range)
9 Rainbow	Spindle	User and 200 lbs. of possessions can <i>polymorph self</i> for a one-hour duration*
10 Orange	Cube	Grants resistance to mind-affecting spells as if user had a wisdom of 20 ( <i>PHB</i> , page 17)
11 Pulsing red	Star	Adds + 1 to all saving throws vs. fire-based attacks
12 Flickering white	Snowflake	Adds + 1 to all saving throws vs. cold-based attacks
13 Brown	Rhomboid	User and 200 lbs. of possessions can assume <i>gaseous form</i> for a one-hour duration*
14 Green	Sphere	Adds + 1 to all saving throws vs. gas-based attacks
15 Gold	Ellipsoid	User and 200 lbs. of possessions can go <i>astral</i> for a one-hour duration*
16 Yellow	Sphere	Sheds <i>continual light</i> on command
17 Silver	Sphere	Negates rear-attack bonuses against user from any source
18 Copper	Rectangle	Allows user to <i>read magic</i> at will
19 Silver	Rod	Adds + 1 to all saving throws vs. electrical attacks
20 Brass	Lozenge	Adds 2d4 + 2 hp to user on command, usable once per day*
21 Cerulean blue	Rhomboid	Bestows <i>free action</i> on user, as per the magical ring
22 Blue green	Spindle	Bestows <i>airy water</i> in 10'-radius sphere at will
23 Pale yellow	Lozenge	Bestows <i>water walk</i> ability at will
24 Puce	Cube	Bestows <i>ESP</i> ability at will; user can scan surface thoughts of one person per round within a range of 30'
25 Light blue	Prism	Allows user to understand all spoken languages
26 Clear pink	Sphere	"Spirit storage"; has no apparent benefit until user receives a death blow in combat* *
27 Rainbow	Ellipsoid	User can <i>levitate</i> at will
28 Maroon	Star	User can be harmed only by magical weapons and spells (then taking full damage)
29 All possible	Any	Cursed version of any stone type; DM's decision as to exact effects ( <i>remove curse</i> required to stop effects)
30 All possible	Any	Supercharged version of any previous type (DM's choice); doubled effects
31-00	Use <i>Ioun Stones</i> table in <i>DMG</i> , page 173	

\* Stone has 2d10 charges, then turns gray and lifeless.

\*\* The user's soul or spirit is transferred into the *ioun stone*, where it can be easily returned to the body through the power of a *restoration* spell (body will have 1 hp, however).

creatures from the outer planes, and even powerful visitors from parallel Prime Material planes. From these lead sanctuaries, they perform studies of the Positive Material plane, seeking new ways in which to use that power and thus augment their vast arsenals of magic.

At times, these beings are lucky enough to spot a free floating geode that is close enough for an attempt at gathering to be made. Physical means, such as the employment of nets composed of lead strands, are usually used, but some arcane means (*telekinesis*, *limited wish*, and *wish*) will also work. Occasionally, the collector must actually enter the Positive Material plane, but care is taken, for prolonged exposure to the tremendous energy is extremely dangerous, if not fatal.

Some adventurers prefer to avoid the towers of lead, fearing that the creatures within may attack. These foolhardy souls take even greater risks by remaining 'in the plane of Mineral, for they must attempt to reach the geodes and leave before three possibly fatal events occur. The first danger is the positive energy pulse that travels rapidly through the Mineral

plane's fringes at a speed of 900' per round. This energy wave consumes everything it encounters, with the exception of the geodes and the towers. The second danger is the chance of *fossilization*, which can occur due to the extended exposure to the plane of Mineral, as it is part of the elemental plane of Earth.<sup>4</sup>

The third danger is that 90% of the geodes are watched over by some quasi-elemental creatures that will fight to the death to protect its "treasure." Characters should use extreme caution regarding how many *ioun stones* are taken from the Mineral realm. All of the native life forms show extreme hostility toward anyone removing large numbers of gems from their plane, and *ioun stones* are more highly prized than any ordinary gemstones. The attempted removal of more than five stones will most assuredly (90%) prompt an attack from some quasi-elemental creature.<sup>5</sup> These creatures always attempt to notify Crystalle of the theft, and they harass the characters on their entire journey homeward. Crystalle might even go to the extreme of sending 2d6 shards (see "The Dragon's Bestiary" in this issue for details) into the Prime Material plane to attack the

thieves and recover the stones.

Once safely collected, the geodes can be broken open to reveal a glittering collection of small gems. The shell of each geode is extremely hard, and only weapons of + 3 enchantment can break it open, with care being taken that none of the stones are damaged in the process. The opening of the nodule is very dangerous, for it always releases a burst of residual positive energy. This explosion is similar to a *fireball* but is variable in its intensity. The burst inflicts 3d10 six-sided dice of fire damage to anyone within a 15' radius, causing all flammable items to save vs. fire or be ignited.

The difficult tasks now over, the newly harvested stones are quite easy to use. By firmly grasping a stone, any character can imprint his personal magnetic aura into the gem's structure. The activated crystal is then tossed lightly into the air, where it orbits the user like a small glowing moon. This orbit is not always elliptical but follows a seemingly random, meandering pathway as it maneuvers along the user's magnetic force lines. A stone alternately sits motionless in midair or dances and

weaves about, rarely straying more than 3' from its owner. Sometimes, a stone wanders up to 12' from the user for no apparent reason, but it quickly returns, its obscure "mission" complete.<sup>6</sup>

While in orbit, a stone creates an energy transference that sends small amounts of its stored energy back to the user. Such stored potential can amplify the character's standard ability scores (increasing strength, intelligence, dexterity, etc.). A character may also gain an unusual power that he never had before (protection from spells, psionics, gas, etc.). These powers are temporary, lasting only as long as the stone is in orbit.

Whenever separated from the user (while the latter sleeps, for example) the stones sits motionless, capable of being reattuned by anyone wishing to employ its special powers. Thus, a stone can be given from one user to another, retaining the same level of magical energy, perhaps for years.

Sometimes, however, a stone suddenly burns out (flat 5% chance per year). Burned-out stones are forever useless, becoming dull gray and lifeless. Still, these might be useful to characters with psionic powers, as the AD&D 1st Edition *DMG*, page 147, allowed each of them to add 10 points to a character's psionic strength total, to a maximum of 50 points. This property can apply to the AD&D 2nd Edition psionics system in the *Complete*

*Psionics Handbook*, too. Burned-out stones still "fly."

Occasionally a character using an *ioun stone* is injured and falls almost lifeless to the ground (0 to -9 hp). During this time, the orbit of his stones slows, moving closely above the person's head. When death does occur (-10 hp), the stones drift at a speed of 20' per round, traveling 3d6 X 10 feet before gently dropping to the ground. During this aimless drifting, a stone can be more easily captured or struck by weapons (treat as AC 3). If the death of a character is particularly violent (e.g., he goes from positive hit points to -10 or lower in one round), the stones whiz off at great speed in a random direction, traveling 2d6 X 10 feet before falling to the ground. If, during this mad flight, they strike an obstacle, a saving throw vs. crushing blow must be made in order to determine the effects of the impact. If one strikes a character, it does 1 hp damage.

Despite the dangers involved, stones are a valuable treasure, well worth the risks involved in obtaining them in quantities, for the powers they grant will greatly aid in the successful completion of many adventures.

#### Footnotes

1. POLYHEDRON™ Newszine, issue #15, "Dispel Confusion" column: Question—A red sphere stone adds +1 to dexterity (18

maximum). Can it raise a half-orc's dexterity above the racial maximum? Answer—Yes, but only while being used, these things are very powerful and will increase ability scores above racial maximum.

In my campaign, the users of the green prism stones gain full maximum benefits from such usage—i.e., maximum hit points for the level gained (one full hit die). All other functions and abilities are at full potential.

2. See *Manual of the Planes*, pages 117-119, appendix I, The Prime Material planes, for further details.

3. At the GEN CON® 20 game fair, *Manual of the Planes* author Jeff Grubb held a seminar in which he described the Positive Material plane as "basically a great star . . . a realm where no adventurer, regardless of protection, could hope to survive for long. This area is definitely off limits to adventurers."

4. *Manual of the Planes* contains complete details on the fossilization process. See the chapter, "The Plane of Elemental Earth," pages 42-43, for complete information.

5. DMs should use the encounter chart for the elemental plane of Earth to determine random encounters here. Also, DRAGON® issue #125 has details on the quasi-elemental of Mineral (among others), in the article "Plane Speaking."

6. Some wizards have observed that if a character is looking intently at something, some *ioun stones* that he possesses will move toward the object of his scrutiny.

#### New *ioun stones*

There never seem to be enough different types of *ioun stones*. After several years of gaming, many players can readily identify all of them. This reduces their effectiveness as a unique treasure. In order to remedy this "boredom," I have introduced many new and unusual stones into my campaign. These include even a few altered and *cursed* versions of the standard types. This makes using these gems a bit more interesting and serves once again to keep the players guessing.

Some of the altered stones I introduced were amplified versions of ordinary stones, but because of repeated exposures to the Positive Material plane their effects are doubled (thus giving +2 protection; +2 ability scores, 19 maximum; etc.). These gems are more unstable, having a 20% chance per year of burning out.

Occasionally, a stone geode is harvested too soon, resulting in unfinished (*cursed*) versions of the standard types. These *ioun stones* steal an ability or drain away a power, then burn out, crumbling into dust. Players usually become more cautious once this phenomenon occurs.

Presented in the New *Ioun Stones* Table are 30 new stone types that DMs might wish to use in their campaign.

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# The Dragon's Bestiary

by Matthew P. Hargenrader

Artwork by Thomas Baxa and Matthew P. Hargenrader

## Who guards the *ioun stones*? Here are some candidates

If an AD&D® game campaign makes use of the information on ioun stones in this issue's "Bazaar of the Bizarre," the adventurers might plan expeditions aimed at obtaining a large batch of these powerful crystals. Only the strongest adventurers will withstand the rigors of such a quest. Survival in the elemental plane of Earth is difficult, and the quasi-elemental plane of Mineral is even more dangerous due to the proximity of the Positive Material plane.

In order to add flavor to such a quest, this article contains details on several creatures that are unique to the realm of Mineral: the glomus, shard, spined shard, chamrol, energy pod, and trilling crysmal. Each creature presents an adventuring group with different dangers whenever it is encountered—which will occur frequently, especially if the party has taken gems or *ioun stones* without permission during its visit.

Whenever an elemental guide is summoned in the quasi-plane of Mineral, a shard almost always answers the call (85%). Rarely, a trilling crysmal answers the summons (10%); very rarely, a spined shard appears (5%). The adventurers must be prepared to negotiate with their intended guide, offering gifts in the form of rare minerals or valuable gems.

Other encounters will occur during the

journey. Consult the following chart:

### 1d20 Result

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| 1-3   | Glomus  |
| 4-5   | Chamrol (only in the Positive Material boundary; otherwise a shard) |
| 6     | Quasi-elemental of Mineral (DRAGON issue #125, page 69)             |
| 7-8   | Spined shard  |
| 9-11  | Energy pod  |
| 12-15 | Trilling crysmal  |
| 16-20 | Shard   |

Most of these creatures are never found outside of their home plane unless summoned by wizards or sent on a special mission by Crystalle, their quasi-elemental liege. The only plane that they can freely enter is their parent plane, the elemental plane of Earth. "Frequency" in the descriptions is given for both non-Mineral plane areas and Mineral plane areas (the latter is in parentheses); this also applies to "Treasure" entries.

All of these creatures have the abilities and immunities common to creatures of the inner planes (see *Manual of the Planes*, appendix II, pages 120-121). While on their home plane, these creatures are immune to all spells that affect solid matter (*disinte-*

*grate, transmute rock to mud, move earth, stone to flesh, etc.*), and each has the ability to cast *passwall* at will. These are called "elemental abilities."

**Habitat/Society:** As with many of the inhabitants of the quasi-elemental planes, little is known or can be conjectured about the social life of these beings. Many serve Crystalle (described later), but they only rarely serve any other master unless under duress. Nothing is known about the reproductive cycle of these creatures.

**Ecology:** As all of these beings feed upon positive energy which is boundless in their habitat, their life cycles have no appreciable effect on the environment. As elemental beings, they will act to preserve their environment, and will attack anyone they feel is harming it.

Any DM wishing to take a group of adventurers to the Mineral plane should familiarize himself with all of the information dealing with the three planes that will be traveled through: the Ethereal plane (*Manual of the Planes*, pages 11-21), the elemental plane of Earth (*Manual of the Planes*, pages 41-45), and the quasi-elemental planes (*Manual of the Planes*, pages 55-59). All of these sections have information dealing with encounters, creatures, spell-casting, and the effects of these planes on magical items.

## Glomus

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Plane of Mineral

FREQUENCY: Very rare (common)

ORGANIZATION: Solitary or "pod"

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any

DIET: Positive energy

INTELLIGENCE: Average

TREASURE: Nil (QX5)

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

NO. APPEARING: 1d6

ARMOR CLASS: 0

MOVE: Fl9 (B)

HIT DICE: 1-10

THAC0: Variable

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d4 per HD

SPECIAL ATTACKS: High damage (if 5+ HD); area-effect explosive 'death'

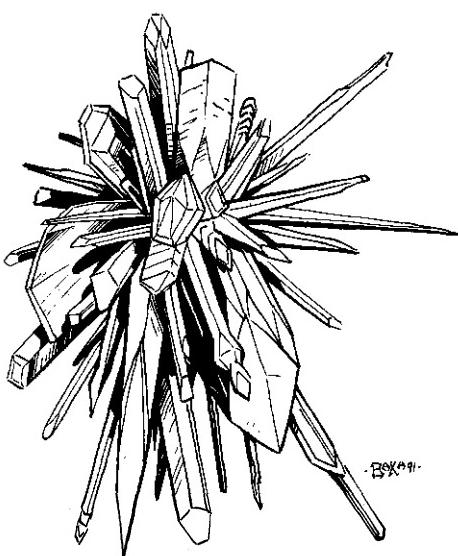
SPECIAL DEFENSES: +2 or better weapon to hit, destroys nonmagical weapons, flight, elemental abilities, regeneration

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: S-L (1'-10')

MORALE: Steady (12)

XP VALUE: Variable



The glomus is one of the many unusual creatures encountered on the quasi-elemental plane of Mineral, and only on the rarest of occasions is it encountered away from its native plane. Appearing to be nothing more than a great compact mass of individual crystals, the glomus "flies" serenely through the Mineral realm using a form of levitation. This movement is combined with a process similar to a passwall spell, allowing the glomus to travel through any medium that it might encounter.

**Combat:** A pseudomagnetism holds the crystals rigidly in place in a roughly spherical shape that measures 1d10 feet across (a glomus has 1 HD per 1' of diameter). Many sharp-edged spires of crystal protrude at various angles, providing the glomus with weaponry readied in every

direction. During combat, the glomus attempts to collide with an enemy, inflicting 1d4 hp damage for each hit die it possesses; thus, a 6'-diameter, 6-HD glomus inflicts 6d4 hp damage.

The conglomerate surface of the glomus is extremely hard (AC 0) and protects the creature from any normal weapon; even weapons of +1 enchantment are unable to harm a glomus. Any weapon that is not magical will automatically shatter upon striking the glomus. Blunt weapons of +2 magic or better are capable of inflicting double damage on a successful hit.

When a glomus reaches zero hit points, the pseudomagnetic bonds holding it together are nullified and the crystalline beast will explosively burst apart. This detonation projects the individual components at great speed, and any creature within a 20' radius receives 1d4 hp damage for each hit die the glomus had. Those who successfully save vs. breath weapon take only half damage.

Amazingly, after an hour of disruption, the component crystals begin to reform the glomus. This process takes one day for each hit die the glomus had. Only when the crystals are completely shattered (when it has taken over twice its total hit points in damage) is a glomus truly destroyed.

## Shard

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Plane of Mineral

FREQUENCY: Uncommon (rare)

ORGANIZATION: Swarm

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any

DIET: Positive energy

INTELLIGENCE: Low

TREASURE: Nil (U)

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

NO. APPEARING: 2d10 (see text)

ARMOR CLASS: -4

MOVE: Fl 20 (B)

HIT DICE: 5-10

THAC0: Variable

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2d4 +2 (+1 per HD)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Color burst

SPECIAL DEFENSES: +2 or better weapon to hit, destroys lesser weapons, flight, elemental abilities

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 15%

SIZE: M-L

MORALE: Steady (12)

XP VALUE: Variable

The crystalline shard is one of many minor quasi-elementals on the plane of Mineral. This sentient mineral life form is of low intelligence and is rarely encountered on the Prime Material plane. Shards are, however, occasionally summoned in order to serve as guards for some treasure, almost always gems as they will guard these without hesitation.

In the Mineral plane, these highly mobile crystals can be found skirting the area that lies between the realm of Mineral and the Positive Material plane. Here they absorb the power that gives them life, making forays through the Mineral plane and sometimes traveling to the depths of the elemental plane of Earth. Shards always move about in swarms, the most common group consisting of 2d10 individuals of various sizes (90% chance). Rarely (9% chance), the shards travel in larger swarms, numbering 100 individuals. There are reports of huge groupings with over 1,000 shards, but such groups are very rare (1% chance).

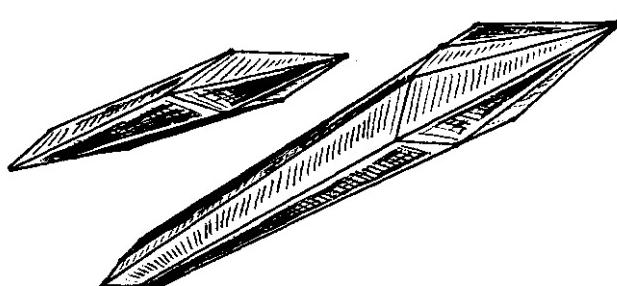
**Combat:** Composed entirely of crystal, the shard possesses an extremely hard surface that can be harmed only by weapons of +2 or better enchantment. Any nonmagical weapon that strikes a shard has a 25% chance of shattering. Magical weapons are entitled to a saving throw vs. crushing blow in order to avoid this effect.

The attack method employed by the shard consists of a slashing assault with its razor-sharp edges. These edges are the equivalent of +2 weapons and inflict 2d4 +2 hp damage, plus 1 hp damage per hit die (+5 to +10).

Once per day, a shard can employ an unusual ability by spinning rapidly in place, emitting a paralyzing burst of multi-colored light (as per the wizard spell, color spray) that covers an area with a 30' radius. Anyone caught within the area of effect must save vs. spells or stand dazzled for 2d4 rounds, even if attacked; paralyzed victims are much easier to strike (+4 on the attackers' to-hit roll).

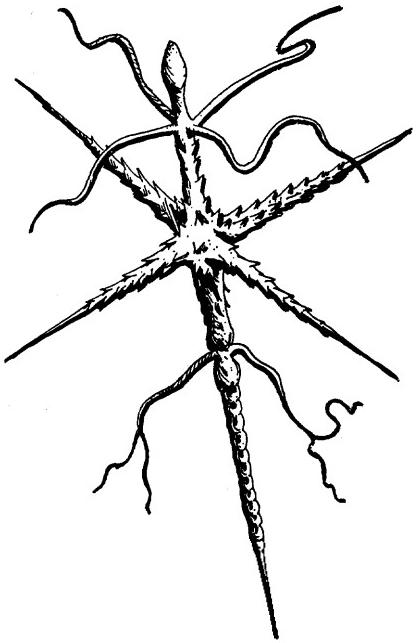
A shard swarm will very rarely be sent to the Prime Material plane on a special mission, usually to seek out any adventurers that may have taken large numbers of gems from the quasi-plane of Mineral.

There are also reported sightings of shards over 15' long, weighing several tons, but these rumors have not been substantiated.



## Spined shard

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Plane of Mineral*  
FREQUENCY: *Rare (very rare)*  
ORGANIZATION: *Solitary or "pod"*  
ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*  
DIET: *Positive energy*  
INTELLIGENCE: *Average to very*  
TREASURE: *Nil (T,U,V,X)*  
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*  
NO. APPEARING: *1d4*  
ARMOR CLASS: *-6*  
MOVE: *F1 24 (B)*  
HIT DICE: *7 + 14*  
THAC0: *13*  
NO. OF ATTACKS: *4*  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1d4/1d4/1d4/1d4*  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Energy stingers, energy burst*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *+2 or better weapon to hit, destroys lesser weapons, flight, elemental abilities*  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *75% (see text)*  
SIZE: *L (12' long)*  
MORALE: *Champion (15)*  
XP VALUE: *10,000*



Perhaps the most dangerous and feared inhabitant of the border area that lies between the quasi-plane of Mineral and the Positive Material plane is the spined shard. This malign creature is at home both deep into the pure positive energy that it absorbs and within the realm of Mineral—the spined shards hunting ground.

**Combat:** The spined shard is a highly intelligent and extremely cunning opponent. The surface of the creature is very hard; only weapons of +2 or better enchantment can damage a spined shard, and any lesser weapons that make contact will automatically melt (weapons of +1 enchantment have a 50% chance of being likewise affected).

In a 10' radius, the spined shard con-

stantly generates a field of intense magical interference that acts as a limited anti-magic shell. This field has a 75% chance of distorting and ruining any spell cast into the area.

During combat, the spined shard uses its four small tentacles for attack purposes. Each whiplike appendage can inflict 1d4 hp damage. If two or more of these attacks successfully strike a single opponent, the victim is automatically grasped and pulled within range of the two double-whip stingers. These stingers can attack a grappled opponent, having a +4 to hit such victims and inflicting 2d6 hp of energy damage.

The most feared attacks used by the spined shard are the four energy bursts that it can hurl each day. These rays are emitted from the four radial spines, each traveling in a tight beam that is only one inch in diameter. This powerful force can strike one victim for 8d8 hp damage (save vs. spells to avoid the beam and all damage). Each energy beam had a range of 75'. In addition, the victim of this attack retains half of the energy that struck him for a duration of one turn. During this time, any living being that approaches within 5' will cause the residual energy to arc, striking this new victim for 4d8 hp damage (save vs. paralysis for half damage). Victims of the secondary pulse do not retain a charge that causes further arcing.

This predator is vindictive and will kill for no reason. They will wantonly attack entire swarms of shards, feeding on their stored energies. Creatures that approach within 90' risk instant attack by these beings. When sorely injured, spined shards attempt to grab opponents and *plane shift* deep into the Positive Material plane on the following round.

High-level wizards will occasionally summon spined shards to serve as a guardians for particularly powerful magical items. Extreme care should be taken, however, for without the proper protection the wizard will be instantly attacked.

## Chamrol

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Plane of Mineral*  
FREQUENCY: *Unknown (common)*  
ORGANIZATION: *Solitary or "pod"*  
ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*  
DIET: *Positive energy*  
INTELLIGENCE: *Semi- to low*  
TREASURE: *Nil (Q X 20)*  
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*  
NO. APPEARING: *1d8*  
ARMOR CLASS: *2*  
MOVE: *0*  
HIT DICE: *1 hp per foot of length (5 hp count as 1 HD); range of 5-100 HD*  
THAC0: *Variable*  
NO. OF ATTACKS: *1d6 per opponent*  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1d6 per attack*  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Positive energy burst, constricting*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *+2 or better weapon*

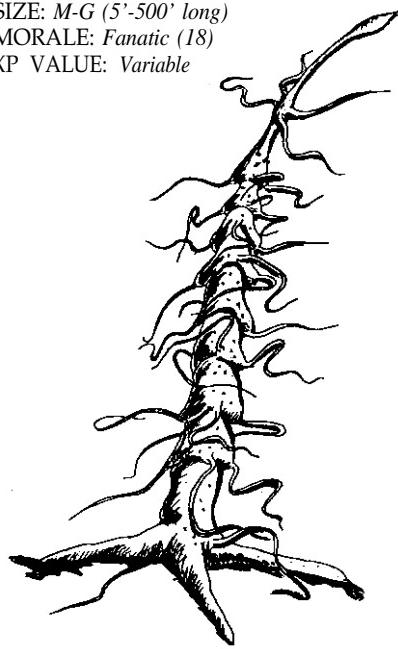
*to hit, fire and electrical resistance, elemental abilities*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *75%*

SIZE: *M-G (5'-500' long)*

MORALE: *Fanatic (18)*

XP VALUE: *Variable*



Any adventurer traveling to the border zone between the Positive Material plane and the quasi-elemental plane of Mineral will almost surely encounter one or more chamrols. These huge creatures grow in profusion throughout this area. Possessing the qualities of plants, animals, and minerals, chamrols are encountered nowhere else, for here they can bask in the pure energy of the Positive Material plane.

A chamrol is composed almost entirely of very dense metals, mostly lead (80%); with exteriors that are studded with crystalline outcroppings. One very rare species of chamrol is composed of gold, but such types occur only 1% of the time. The chamrol's mineral roots extend deep into the minerals that permeate the entire quasi-plane. Some sages have claimed that the chamrols' roots extend all the way to the elemental plane of Earth. An average chamrol is 5d100 feet high.

**Combat:** The central stalk of the chamrol is coated with a covering of foliated, micalike scales. Protruding through these thin plates are dozens of writhing tentacles. Any character coming within 20' of a chamrol can be attacked by 1d6 of these tentacles, with each successful hit inflicting 1d6 hp damage. There is also a 15% cumulative chance that a successful attack enables the tentacle to grasp its victim. Anyone grabbed thereafter receives 1d6 hp constricting damage automatically for each round that he is held. The victim can attempt to break free if he makes a bend bars/lift gates roll, one roll per round; failure allows the chamrol to inflict another round of damage.

Once per day for each 100' of length, the chamrol can draw on its energy reserves to generate a tremendous bolt of

positive energy. This powerful jolt, a cylinder of energy emitted from the tapered apex of the chamrol, can reach any target within 120' of the chamrol's base and affects an area 60' in diameter. Anyone caught within this area receives 2 hp damage per 10' of the chamrol's length (save vs. breath weapons to reduce damage by half). This attack is neither electrical nor fiery, so items that protect against these two effects will not help for saving-throw purposes.

Chamrols are immune to all fire and electrical attacks, but acid inflicts double damage. Only weapons of +2 enchantment or better are capable of injuring a chamrol.

## Energy pod

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Plane of Mineral*  
FREQUENCY: Rare (very rare)

ORGANIZATION: Solitary or pair

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any

DIET: *Positive energy*

INTELLIGENCE: Low

TREASURE: Nil (U,V)

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

NO. APPEARING: 1 (10% chance of 2)

ARMOR CLASS: 0

MOVE: Fl 12 (B)

HIT DICE: 8

THAC0: 13

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2 per opponent

DAMAGE/ATTACK: Variable (see text)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil

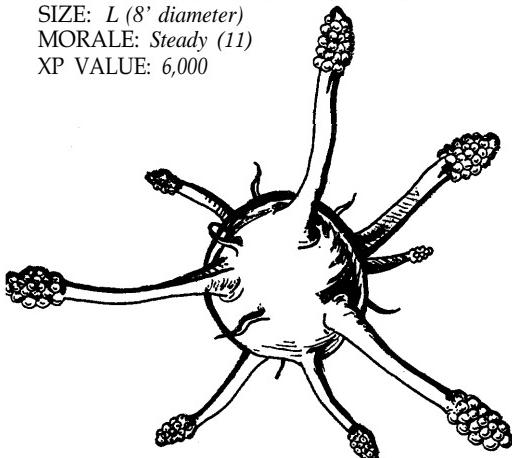
SPECIAL DEFENSES: +2 or better weapon  
to hit, flight, elemental abilities

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 100% (see text)

SIZE: L (8' diameter)

MORALE: Steady (11)

XP VALUE: 6,000



The spherical energy pod is yet another bizarre life form native to the fringe area that lies between the Positive Material plane and the quasi-plane of Mineral. Although it is mainly a native of the positive realms, this fairly large creature dwells within the border area storing energy and making occasional forays into the Mineral domains.

**Combat:** The stored energy is kept in the botryoidal clusters that are located at the ends of its eight stubby tentacles. Each cluster contains 6d4 nodules, all of which glow with a pulsing, lambent power. Dur-

ing combat, the energy pod flails with these limbs, being able to use two against each opponent in range, two opponents maximum. On a successful hit, 2d4 of the nodules burst open, each releasing a blast of positive energy. Each nodule that breaks inflicts 1d4 + 2 hp damage. Once all of the nodules on a tentacle have been broken, that appendage has no effective attack.

Weapons of at least +2 enchantment are required to strike an energy pod. Since it feeds on power, the creature automatically absorbs the energy of any spells cast upon it, including spell-like effects from devices. This energy is used to create additional nodules, one per spell level absorbed. These nodules appear immediately on a random appendage (roll 1d8 to determine which tentacle).

Acid thrown on an energy pod will do double damage. The pods have no other particular resistances or vulnerabilities.

Energy pods are very rarely encountered on the Prime Material plane, almost always as guardians for magical treasures. It is also rumored that there exists a Negative Material plane creature that is a mirror image of the energy pod.

## Trilling crysmal

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Plane of Mineral*

FREQUENCY: Uncommon (very rare)

ORGANIZATION: Solitary or "pod"

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any

DIET: *Positive energy*

INTELLIGENCE: Average to high

TREASURE: Nil (Q X 5,U)

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

NO. APPEARING: 1d6

ARMOR CLASS: -4

MOVE: Fl 12 (B)

HIT DICE: 10

THAC0: 11

NO. OF ATTACKS: 6 (see text)

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d8/1d8/1d8/1d8/1d8/  
1d8

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Crystal darts

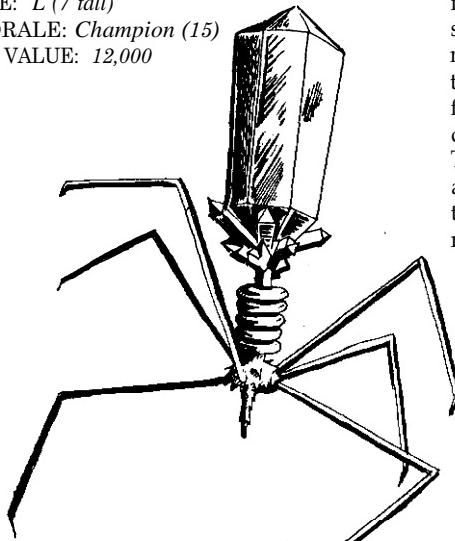
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Spell reflection, +2  
or better weapon to hit, break lesser  
weapons, flight, elemental abilities

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 75% (see text)

SIZE: L (7'tall)

MORALE: Champion (15)

XP VALUE: 12,000



The trilling crysmal is a close relative of the crysmal (*Monster Manual II*) and is uncommon in the elemental plane of Earth. In the quasi-plane of Mineral, however, the trilling crysmal is quite common, for here they live in great numbers, hunting along the boundary zone with the Positive Material plane.

**Combat:** In appearance, the trilling crysmal looks very different from a crysmal. It possesses six long, acicular legs radiating from a central crystal mass. Dominating this "body" is a huge silvery crystal almost 4' high. The entire creature is exceedingly hard, and only weapons of +2 enchantment or better can inflict damage. Lesser weapons have a 10% chance of shattering upon impact with a trilling crysmal.

The trilling crysmal has two methods of attack. The first is a slashing attack using its razor-edged legs (two at most against each opponent, engaging up to three opponents if surrounded). Each leg inflicts 1d8 hp damage. As a secondary weapon, the trilling crysmal can shoot up to six crystal barbs per day. These crystalline darts have ridged, diamond-hard edges that can penetrate the toughest of armor. Darts that successfully hit will inflict 1d4 + 1 hp damage. The darts have a range equal to a light crossbow.

Additionally, these barbs have a devastating side effect. Moments after striking an opponent, the dart shatters into 3d4 sharp splinters. These splinters cause agonizing pain that is so intense that victims temporarily lose two points of strength and four points of dexterity. Any violent movement (running, combat, etc.) that the victim performs will inflict 1d6 hp damage per round until the splinters are removed. Removal inflicts 1 hp damage per splinter, unless a *cure wounds* spell of any sort is used to neutralize these barbs. Such a spell will eliminate all of the splinters within any one victim.

As a special defense vs. spells cast directly on the trilling crysmal by characters or from devices, this being employs its great central crystal. Using this crystal as a double prism, this being has a 75% chance to "reflect" any spell cast directly on its body. The reflected spell will manifest in a random direction from one of the six facets (roll 1d6 and choose a "hexagonal" direction). The spells activating distance will be (1d4 X 10) +20 feet away from the trilling crysmal, affecting any creature within the spell's area of effect. This spell reflection does not influence area-effect spells (e.g., *cloudkill*), unless the center of such a spell is located directly upon the trilling crysmal.

### Unique *ioun Stones* Table

Color	Shape	Effect
Indigo blue	Trapezohedron	Fossilizer: generates a <i>fossilization pulse</i> ( <i>Manual of the Planes</i> , elemental plane of Earth) with a 30' radius, affecting all living beings within this area; save vs. petrification at -4 to avoid effects; 1d4 + 2 charges
Frosty white Blood red	Octahedron Orthorhomboid	<i>Wish</i> stone: contains 1-4 <i>wishes</i> (as per the ninth-level wizard spell) Transmuter: changes nonliving minerals to energy (totally disrupts one rocky or crystalline 10' X 10' X 10' target per usage); 1d8 + 2 charges
Black	Pyritohedron	Energy drainer: drains all magical energy from one item, or one level/hit die of life energy from one victim; save vs. spells (if living) or save vs. disintegration (if nonliving) to avoid effects; 60' range; 2d4 charges
Brilliant green	Bipyramidal	Energy pulser: infuses the target with energy, causing 1d8 hp damage per round for 1-10 rounds; all metals within 20' of the target are heated as per the druidic spell <i>heat metal</i> ; 2d6 charges
Clear	Interconnected spheres	Insubstantializer: user becomes ghostlike, immune to any physical or magical attacks for a duration of one turn; 1d6 + 1 charges

### Crystalle

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Plane of Mineral

FREQUENCY: Unique

ORGANIZATION: Solitary

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any

DIET: Positive energy

INTELLIGENCE: Genius

TREASURE: Nil (Q,T,U,V,X)

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: -4 (variable)

MOVE: 18, Fl 24 (B)

HIT DICE: 12 (96 hp)

THAC0: 9

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 3d8 + 8/3d8 + 8

SPECIAL ATTACKS: High-damage attacks, spells

SPECIAL DEFENSES: +4 or better weapon to hit, elemental abilities, flight, spells

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 95%

SIZE: L (22' tall)

MORALE: Fearless (19)

XP VALUE: 16,000

a gem-laden throne made of the rarest minerals, from which he attempts to command the masses of lesser quasi-elements.

Wielding a great scepter composed of rare gemstones, many never seen before on the Prime Material plane, Crystalle sits in his throne hall and watches over his realm. Countless shards and trilling crysmals act as his eyes and ears, reporting extraplanar intrusions to their liege. Also serving Crystalle are hundreds of spined shards, his soldiers and instruments of punishment.

**Combat:** Crystalle has all the spell-casting powers of a 14th-level wizard, with the resources to use any spell of up to seventh level given in the AD&D rules. He can also cast *prismatic sphere* once per day at will if in bright light equal to a *continual light* spell or brighter. His scepter, which functions only for him, acts as a *staff of the magi* and a *rod of absorption* at the same time, having effectively unlimited charges.

Two notable features about Crystalle make him stand above the other quasi-elements of this plane. The first is a high intelligence and cunning that make Crystalle a formidable opponent. Many lesser quasi-elements seeking to overthrow him were cunningly lured to the dangerous fringe area that lies between the plane of Mineral and the Positive Material plane. Here they were defeated by Crystalle and were hurled into the energy plane, forever destroyed.

The second feature of interest is a veritable cloud of *ioun stones* present around Crystalle at all times. Crystalle is never encountered without at least 20 functional stones (none of them burned-out gray stones). These powerful gems amplify his abilities, granting powers that no other quasi-elemental possesses. Some of these gems were given to Crystalle as tribute by lesser creatures seeking to gain favor. Others are selectively gathered by Crystalle's minions as part of his grand design. Rumors abound that Crystalle has a pri-

vate domain lying deep within the heart of the Mineral plane that contains thousands of free-floating stones.

**Habitat/Society:** The realm of Crystalle is intended to include the whole quasi-elemental plane of Mineral, but his actual reach is not quite that vast. He is well regarded by most inhabitants of this plane, and even earth elementals will generally leave him alone or pay him grudging respect.

Crystalle is solely concerned with protecting his domain from intruders and in acquiring more personal power. He hopes to eventually become a demigod and be able to gain worshipers among his subjects. His palace is already said (by the very few mortals who have lived to see it) to be of astounding magnificence, built of a thousand types of gems and precious stones, but also guarded by several hundred quasi-elements. Unrecorded creatures may lurk within to further add to Crystalle's security.

**Ecology:** Crystalle acts to keep the Mineral plane rich with mineral wealth, though he is not averse to gifting a worthy supplicant with *ioun stones* or trading some gems for a valuable item. He will not do this often, however.

Crystalle also has special areas located along the Positive Material border, where his minions watch over specially selected *ioun stone* nodules. These are private "incubators," some of which have been here for eons, constantly gaining power. The stones resulting from this exposure have unique and tremendous powers, though they are usually short lived, usable only 1d4 times before shattering. The powers of these special gems are limited only by the DM's imagination, keeping game balance in mind.

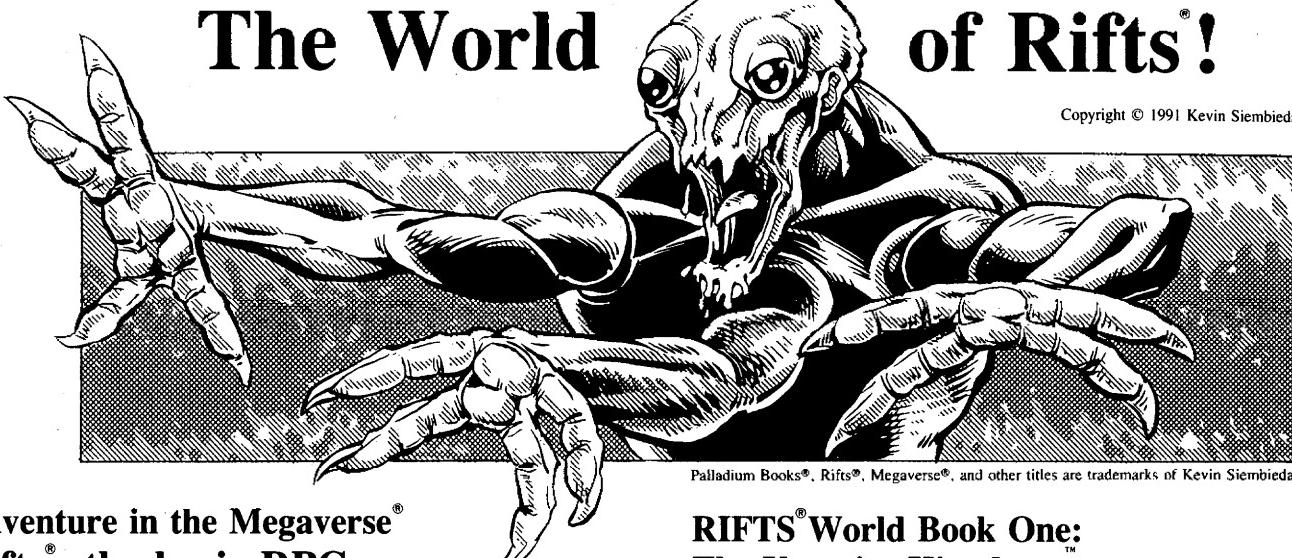
The Unique *ioun Stones* Table shows a few of the unique *ioun stones* that Crystalle may use. Because of the enormous energy they contain, each stone has a limited number of charges. Once all the stone's charges have been used up, the stone becomes burned out and gray.



Crystalle is the self-proclaimed ruler of the plane of Mineral and the prince of all quasi-elements inhabiting this realm. Manifesting as a great crystalline giant, he is one of the largest known quasi-elements. A powerful overlord, Crystalle has set himself upon

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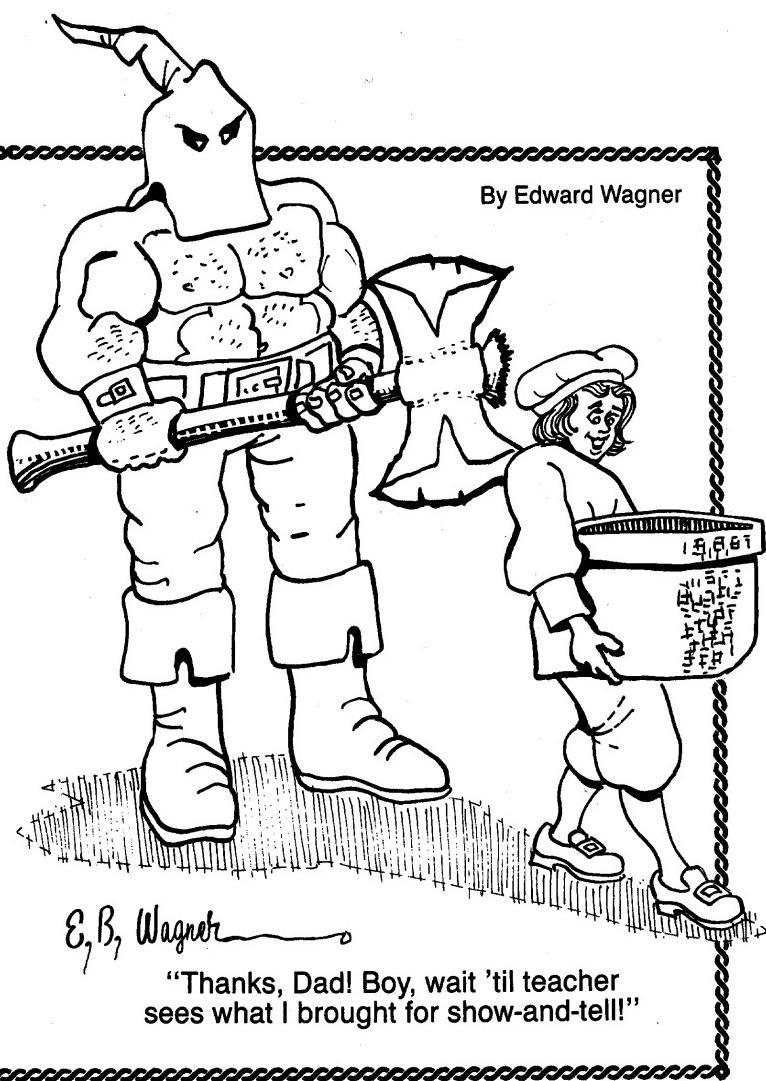
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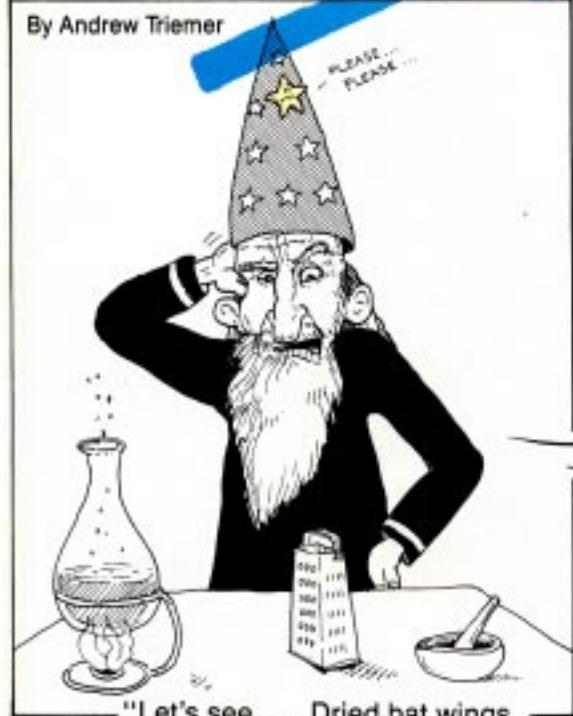
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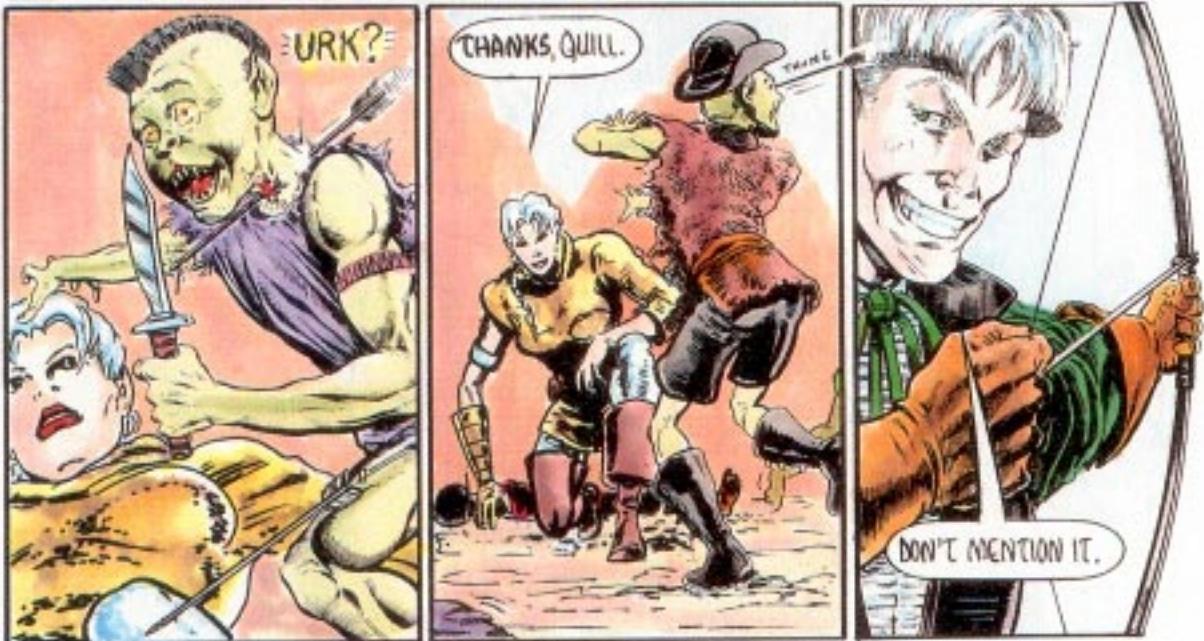
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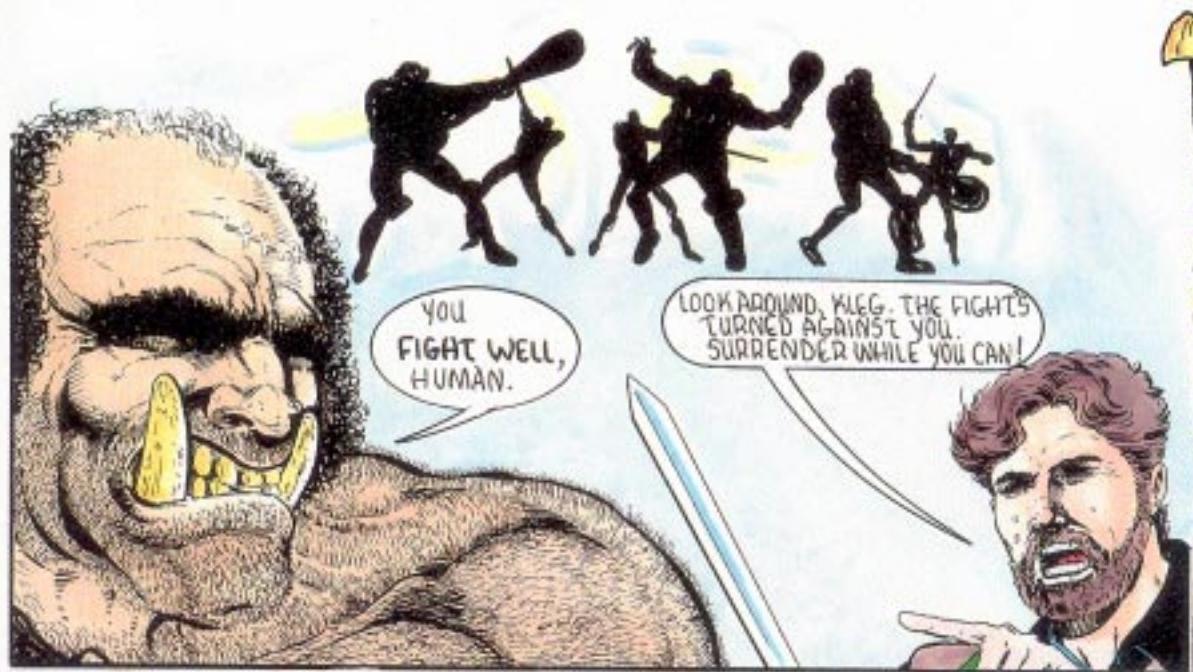
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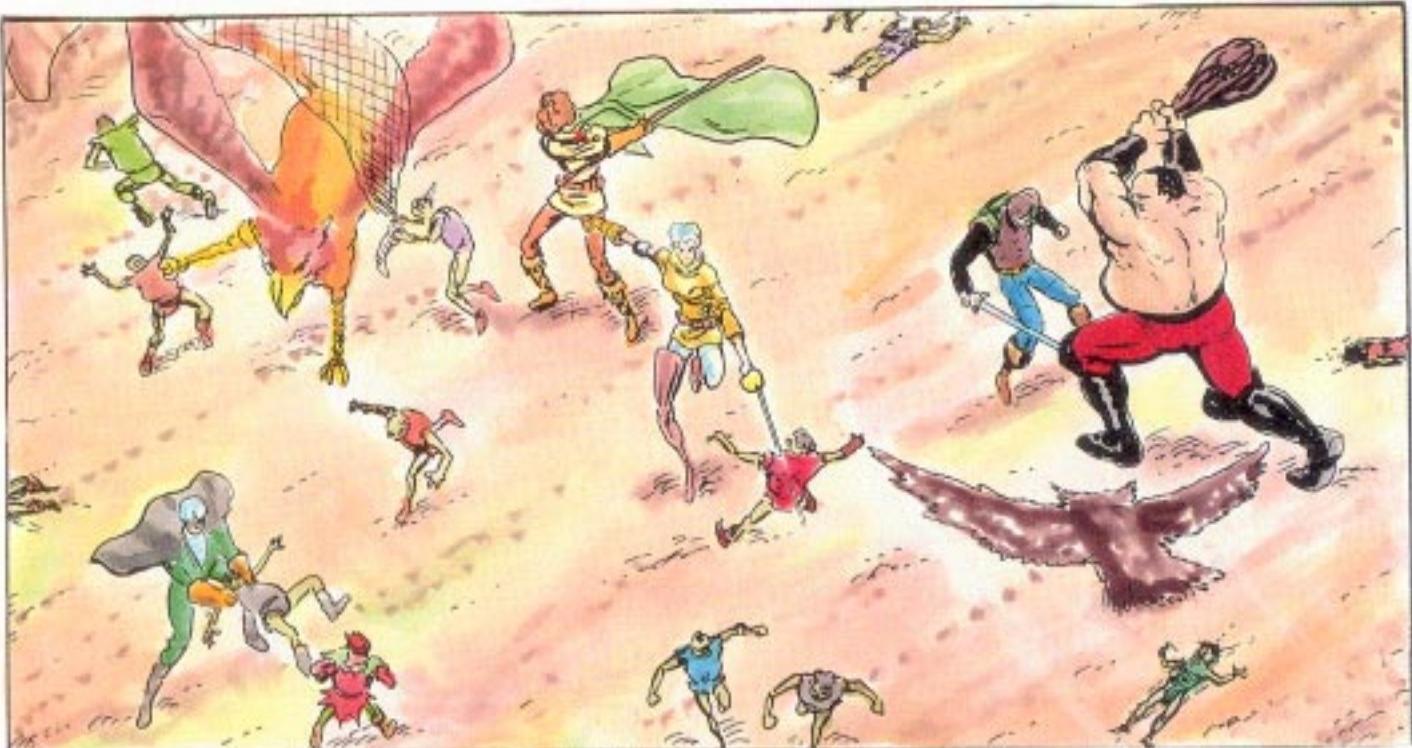
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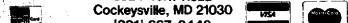


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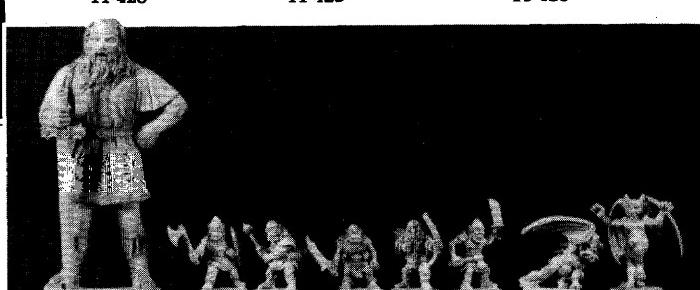
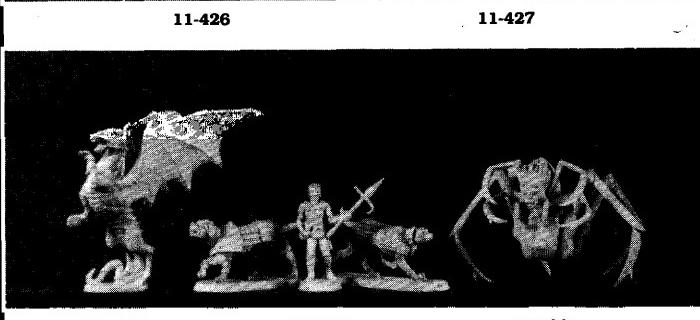
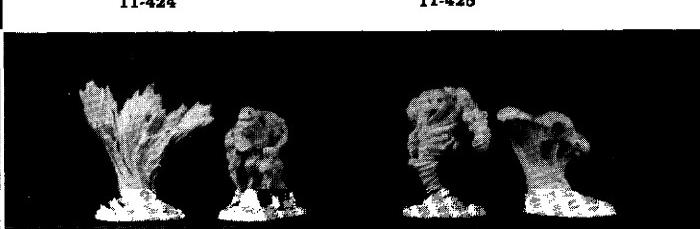
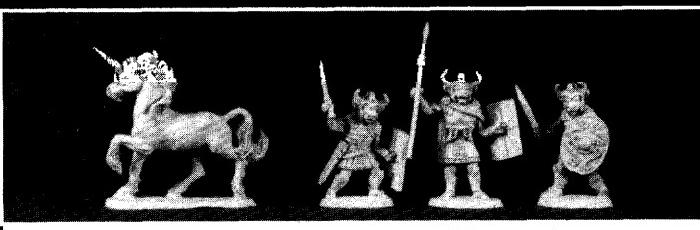
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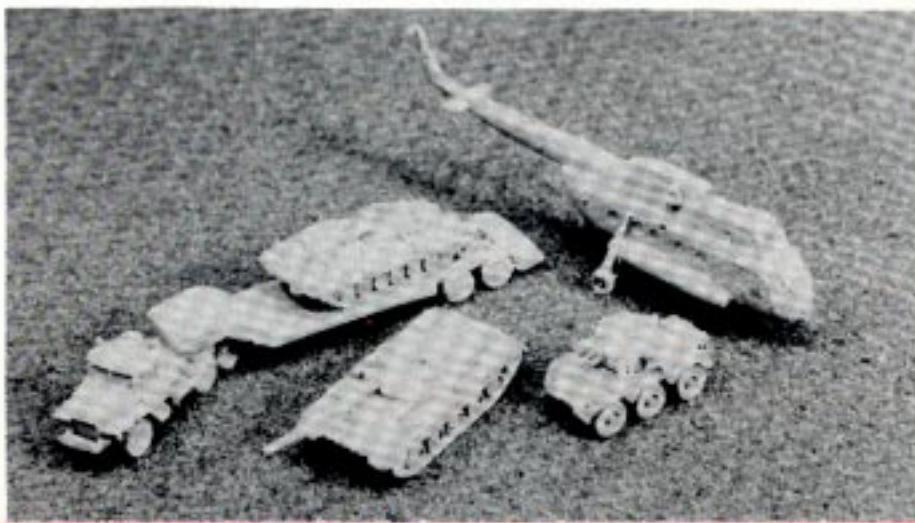
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# Through the LOOKING GLASS

©1991 by Robert Bigelow

Photography by Mike Bethke



Clockwise from left: Motor transport with BMP (composite; manufacturer n/a); Mi-8/17 copier (Inservice); Saladin armored car, T-62 tank (GHO)

## Gaming the Storm: Looking for a few good miniatures

Only a year ago, we were watching an increasingly tense situation develop in the Middle East, following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Everyone was hoping that Iraq's logistics problems would give us time to get heavier Army and Marine units into Saudi Arabia. Those heavy units began to arrive by mid-October, and Coalition forces poured in by air. And everyone was worrying about the hostage situation involving foreigners in occupied Kuwait.

This month's column presents some photos showing equipment now familiar to us thanks to television—done in miniature. The miniatures shown here are manufactured or imported by companies in the U.S.A. and are fairly easy to find. These vehicles include a Saladin armored car, familiar to many as the vehicle shown on a home video (broadcast on network TV) firing in front of a hotel in Kuwait City, and the Mi-8 and Mi-17 helicopters shown on other footage. The tank transporter, BMP, and T-62 were frequently shown in reports covering Iraqi forces.

These miniatures can be used with any number of modern miniatures-combat rules in many different scales. One such rules set is GDW's COMBINED ARMS game. This was designed for people who want to get into miniatures gaming but who also want to save on miniatures or play with smaller groups of miniatures. Here, one vehicles represents either five vehicles or a service detachment. The rules are simple, with step-by-step play sequences and examples. This rules set also presents organizations for many of the armies throughout Europe. Unfortunately, you will not get organizations for the Iraqi military, and thus should contemplate purchasing GDW's *Desert Shield Fact Book* or *Gulf War Fact Book*. Using the miniatures' formula in the COMBINED ARMS game and the organization information in the fact books, you'll have an easy time forming Iraqi units. You should start small and work up to larger units and battles, so as to understand how the game works and not be overwhelmed.

Next month, we will cover more vehicles and rules that will help you to recreate Desert Storm battles or a number of other conflicts that are occurring in the world now. These rules can all be combined with the GULF STRIKE game from Victory Games to fight the battles generated by the campaign game.

Now, on to our reviews.

### Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

## Reviews

### Black Dragon Pewter

2700 Range Rd.  
North Bellmore NY 11710

#### 9666—Young Warrior

\*\*\*\*½

Black Dragon continues to release female characters in its new series of young warriors. This figure is a free-scale, pewter figure 65 mm tall. The figure stands on a rough, simulated-stone surface that is oval in shape, 9 mm wide and 34 mm long. The base is low under her right foot and rises into a rock with almost vertical rough sides under the left.

The figure is dressed in soft boots with high uppers that are almost triangular. A rough spot and cracks appear on the right foot, and no visible sole reinforcement is on either foot. The boots extend to mid-thigh and end in raised fronts with no noticeable support, and wrinkles and sags in the boots suggest that they might be falling. The upper thighs are bare and exhibit little muscle structure.

The figure wears a one-piece body stocking and a pearl necklace to which a circular ruby pendant is attached. Her weapon held by a low-slung belt, is a totally misdone mass with no separations and a thickness way out of proportion to what an actual sword or scabbard would be.

The body has rough and flat spots, due mostly to buffing on the inside part of the thighs, arms, and sides and some planing of the upper arms. The face shows pudgy innocence, with the right side being slightly better done than the left. Her shoulder-length hair is windswept to the right and has long bangs in the front, but does not show fine separation of hair.

This is not a bad model, but "fine" pewter is not evident in this piece. Wearing the costume would lead to death, either by exposure to the elements or by sword blade. This would be a good buy at \$20, but it actually costs \$30.

### Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

656 E. McMillan  
Cincinnati OH 45206-1991

#### 1009—Sea Elf Lord

\*\*\*\*\*

Thunderbolt Mountain's newest release includes a redone figure previously available only from a collector. According to Thunderbolt Mountain, the figure has been off the market for a couple of years and has undergone several changes.

The Sea Elf Lord is made of lead in 54 mm scale. The figure stands about 65 mm tall to the top of the headpiece. The elf is only about 48 mm from base to eyes, which puts him in the right range for an elf. He stands on a nearly square base 38 mm long, 35 mm wide, and 5 mm tall. The top of the base is covered with various sized rocks and stones, some small shells, half a footprint on the back, and a starfish

(not heavily detailed) in the right rear corner. The base is supposed to represent the ocean floor.

The figure is wearing calf-height, unadorned, pointed boots that have wrinkles and flexes at the ankle arches and toes, almost exactly what old boots should look like except for one small detraction: a small but obvious pit on the front side of the right boot. His right hand is covered by a soft glove with wrinkles and an ornate wrist end. The glove goes up to his upper arm. His hand is open slightly to hold a simple long wooden-shaft spear capped off by a worked metal tip with a star-shaped piece at the connection. There is some light flash between the finger tips on this model that was easily cleaned.

His face displays the typical angular look of an elf, with sculpted eye brows. Each eye is well done with ample pupil and a small spot marking where the "gleam" would be. The sides of his head and hair are covered with chain mail that is then covered by a medium-width crown that includes molded-on jewels at regular intervals (you could paint them as rivets). Rising from the crown are four feathers or seaweed pieces bound by an engraved clasp. A sword hilt is exposed over his left shoulder and extends out beneath his poncho. Buckled on his back is a shield that has an emblem showing a tree grasping the moon and stars.

This figure is similar to the 25 mm king figure in the Elf King set, with differences in the spears, boots, and head band. I feel that the 25 mm king has better detailing for its size, especially since it is so much smaller than the 54 mm figure, so I wonder if they should have redone the figure. Plain compared to the company's other figures, this sells for \$8.50 per figure.

### Alternative Armies

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#### FL2—The Doomgarde Command

\*\*\*\*½

It's nice to find a unit that still fits within 25 mm scale and can actually be useful for leading a unit of single figures. The Doomgarde command is in 25 mm scale, and figure heights vary slightly from 23 mm to 24 mm. The figures are made of lead and represent what a command unit for a whole army or elite unit would be. They come five to a pack.

All figures come with irregular, almost circular bases with rounded top surfaces and little detail. All the bases will require some light trimming, as every one has some excess metal. Each figure wears bulky army-type boots with squared toes and barely visible laces. Long robes extend down to ankle length with a clear hem on the bottom. All figures have flash between



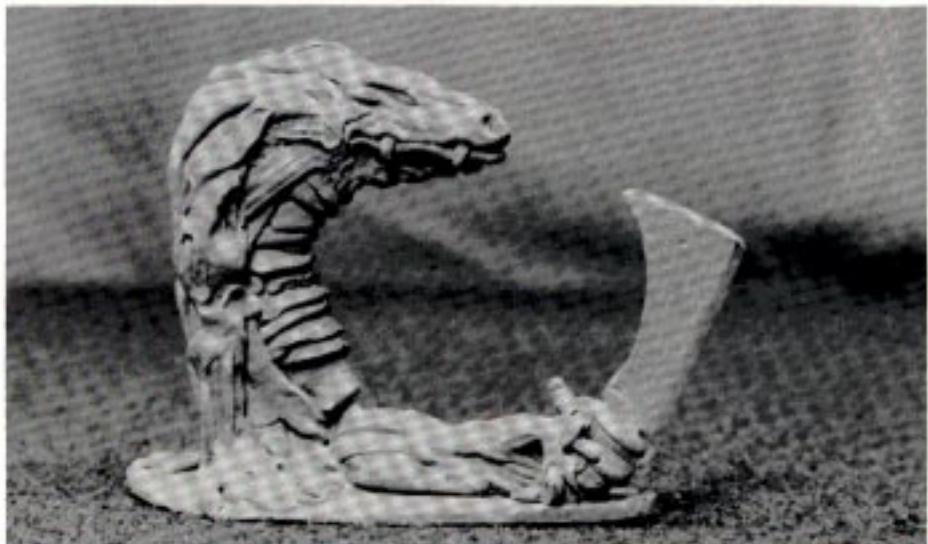
Young Warrior (Black Dragon Pewter)



Sea Elf Lord (Thunderbolt Mountain)



Doomgarde Command (Alternative Armies)



Four Fang Reptile (Viking Forge)

feet and robe, and to remove this flash ranges from easy to tedious, as some are will require drilling before filing. The robes are covered by quilted armor that extends from the waist-length plate to just above the knees. Each figure has a cast chest plate, jointed plates on the arms and shoulders, and back plates. There is additional armor over the groin areas, and plates protecting the joints.

Figure #1 is the unit standard-bearer. He stands at ease, with his right hand clutching a standard pole with a cross tree mounted by crude horns and a tassel. From the cross-tree hangs a blank standard that is fringed or tattered at the bottom.

Figure #2 is blowing a great multisectioned horn that extends from his mouth to around his body and over his shoulder. The horn ends in what appears to be a great snake with its mouth open to emit the call; the snake has exaggerated nostrils

and poorly done fangs. If you really want this to look like a horn, plan on extra care in painting and drill out the trumpet throat slightly.

Figure #3 carries the unit drum, held on his left at waist level by a strap running across his back. The drum is large, with ribbing and decoration more appropriate to Napoleonic-era units than to medieval ones. Like more modern drums, it has a series of side supports and adjustment knobs that apparently control pitch. The drum sticks have round heads and twisted shafts. Both band figures had numerous small pieces of flash.

Figures #4 and #5 have no clear functions in the group. Figure #4 has his sword drawn and held in his right hand at the ready. This figure also has a small personal standard set in hoops on the back of his armor. The pole rises into an L-type support and is capped by a skull. The stand-

ard's fabric is thick, serrated, and joined by a ring at the top and upper front of the pole. Both the sword and the standard are too thick and will need work to bring them into form. I think this figure is more appropriate as a bodyguard, retainer, or squire than a leader, although you may think differently. Figure #5 holds a spear with a thick fleur-type spearhead with tassels.

All of these figures need work, but they will provide some alternate armies and commanders for true 25 mm figures. Figures run \$5.95 per pack.

### Viking Forge

1727 Theresa Lane  
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### CC-07—Four Fang Reptile \*\*\*

Once in a while, you come across a figure that has almost no use in normal gaming activity and minimal use even in exotic settings. The Four Fang Reptile is one of these pieces. The figure is scaled for 25 mm and sits on an undetailed oval base 45 mm long by 18 mm wide. The figure is of a reptilian creature that seems to combine features of the snake, lizard man, and slug. The figure is shaped like a gigantic "C," with a large sword clutched in a handlike appendage connected to what is basically an arm in place of legs. Its head is a combination of snake and alligator, with an elongated jaw and four fangs that extend over a tooth-lined lower jaw. A beardlike ruffling reaches from the jaw bottom to a set of stomach plates that look like they were picked at random and piled on top of each other. The figure's back has a sharp-ridged spine that goes from the top of its head to midback, where it breaks up into several holes and a thickening of the body. The creature's arms stretch from beneath the head to the ground, bearing strangely distorted muscles and ending in long, rippled, five-fingered hands that lie flat against the ground. These two arms appear to be used for locomotion. The slitted snake eyes are elongated and half closed.

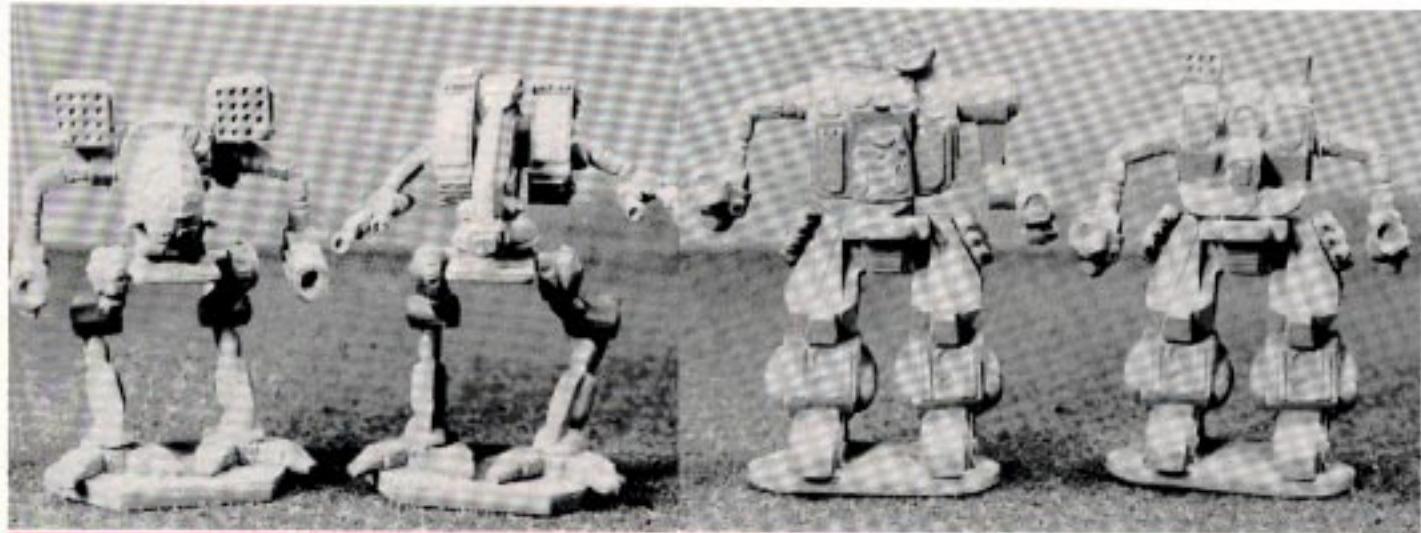
Games Workshop's WARHAMMER FANTASY\* games could use this as a Chaos creature, and in Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU\* game it could be an insane beast. At \$5 each, this is not a recommended piece, although there is no flash and only a barely visible mold line at the top of its head.

### Ral Partha Enterprises

5938 Carthage Ct.  
Cincinnati OH 45212

### 10-842—Heavy Omni 'Mechs \*\*\*\* ½ (assembly required)

In the year since we ran our FASA BATTLETECH\* campaign rules in DRAGON® Magazine, a lot has changed on the miniatures scene. When we ran our



Heavy Omni 'Mechs (Rai Partha)

campaign, we deliberately left out the BATTLETECH game's Clans due to their powerful nature, their way of rapidly changing a battle, and the lack of available miniatures for the opposition.

The Heavy Omni 'Mechs are the Clans' answer to universal weapons platforms. These 'Mechs are made with weapons that can be changed to fit a particular mission. The interchanging of weapons is restricted

only by some frames. Ammo and rockets are protected better than those on any Inner Sphere 'Mech. These units can defeat units twice their size and number, and do so regularly, although some 'Mech pilots here at our club are beginning to use tactics that have caught Clan pilots by surprise.

The 'Mechs in this set are scaled to the 'Mechs already available in 8 mm scale.

The four miniatures represent four popular heavy Omni 'Mechs: the Vulture, the Madcat, the Loki, and the Thor. Discussion of the appearances of the 'Mechs will use data available in FASA's *Technical Readout 3050 (The Return of Kerensky)*. This book (herein called *TR3050*) is a must for Clan warriors and Clan opponents alike.

The Vulture looks almost exactly like the line drawing seen on page 29 of *TR3050*,

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an exception being the slightly off-center position of the lasers on the miniature. The 'Mech stands about 39 mm tall with its legs bent, and is about 32 mm at its widest point. The 'Mech itself looks thin and spindly, incapable of holding its 60-ton weight. The body is mounted on a thin leg assembly identical to that of the Madcat, with exposed, visible joints. The upper body consists of a center section that has the look of a sharp-beaked bird or sunfish. The body is about 4 mm thick at the center, and two enclosed rocket packs jut from a shoulder joint without other frame support. The miniature requires that the packs be glued to the body. Care should be taken to support these boxes, as they tend to sag after gluing. Care should also be taken with the lasers, as they bend easily and don't want to come quite into line again. (These weapons were bent during transporting.) There was no flash on the model, and only the pegs for mounting had to be trimmed slightly.

The Madcat shares the same skinny legs, but the leg posts on the platform needed trimming; otherwise, they don't fit into the

legs. The body peg must also be trimmed slightly, or the body will appear to be elevated above the platform or will be crooked. The upper body looks very much like a Marauder on a smaller scale. The pieces go together well with minimum trimming or filing, although there was a slight imperfection in the rocket pod on the right shoulder where the sighting plate is bolted. Otherwise, no mold lines are noted. This 'Mech stands about 42 mm tall, with a center section 24 mm long and 10 mm thick. This unit also matches the illustration in TR3050, although it does not match the box cover, which shows a much larger scale 'Mech. If you want your Madcat's weapons to match those on the back of the set's box, the weapons must be drilled out.

The Loki can be found on page 31 of TR3050. This 'Mech does not match its picture (check the outside of each leg). Otherwise, we had little trouble with this seven-piece 'Mech, except for the lack of a light screen. I made mine out of scratch lead from the kit, and I like the wider screen look. Some trimming was needed

on the posts, but it was minimal. This 'Mech is just over 42 mm tall and over 14 mm wide, and it has the bulk that we are used to seeing on 'Mechs.

The Thor can be found on page 33 of TR3050. This 'Mech has the same leg setup as the Loki and also the same mistake in the legs. Unfortunately, this 'Mech also has a poorly done cockpit, with unfinished markings for the framing around the windows. Rocket-pod resolution is fair, with some flash. Pegs need a little trimming. This 70-ton 'Mech stands 45 mm tall. This 'Mech also does not match its illustration, although it does match the description of a variant.

These 'Mechs are simply not as damage resistant as the older, heavy-duty 'Mechs, and will break or fall apart easier from to gaming accidents due to their thinner and more bendable pieces and multipiece assembly. The kit also comes equipped with four hex-type bases, which will not be fitted to ours until after painting. The instructions and spare parts included will help the modeler decide what to build and in what form. Even with the extra work, this is recommended at \$19 per set.

#### **11-411—Owlbear**

\* \* \* \* ½

The owlbear is a magical crossbreed of an owl and a bear, taken from TSR's AD&D® and D&D® games. Owlbears are ferocious and bad-tempered beasts with males that weigh 1300-1800 lbs. and can stand up to 8' tall. The owlbear from Ral Partha is in attack mode, with its left paw swiping at an unseen target, and its right leg planted firmly on the ground. The head is clearly that of a giant owl, with feathers extending to midback on top and to the top of its chest in front. Its hooked, tooth-lined beak is open, and its baleful eyes stare forward. The hind part of the beast resembles a very large bear, including a stubby tail.

The figure is very well done with good body and head detail. Feather and fur are easily distinguishable, different and deep enough to shadow and highlight well when painting. There are some bad mold lines on the rear legs and underbody along with some heavy flash, but they are both easy to clean up. Even the base is nicely textured. These are a good buy at \$3 each.

#### **11-413—Displacer Beast**

\* \* \* \* ½

The displacer beast is another carnivorous beast that can tear up an unsuspecting party in an AD&D game. These creatures appear to be giant pumas or mountain lions until their four tentacles are observed. These creatures hunt in packs and weigh over 400 lbs. The Displacer Beast from Ral Partha does an excellent job of capturing this beast in lead. The head of the figure is that of a big cat with fur puffed out along the head. The cat howls with fury, its nostrils flared, eyes wide, and muscles taunt as it stalks forward. The long tentacles, each over 38 mm long, extend from behind the cat's



Owlbear (Ral Partha)



Displacer Beast (Ral Partha)



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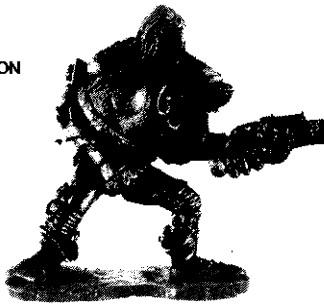
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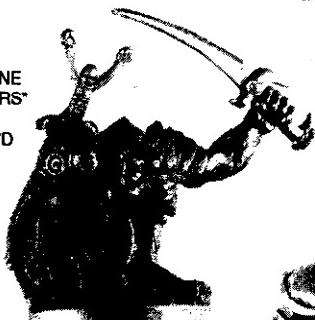
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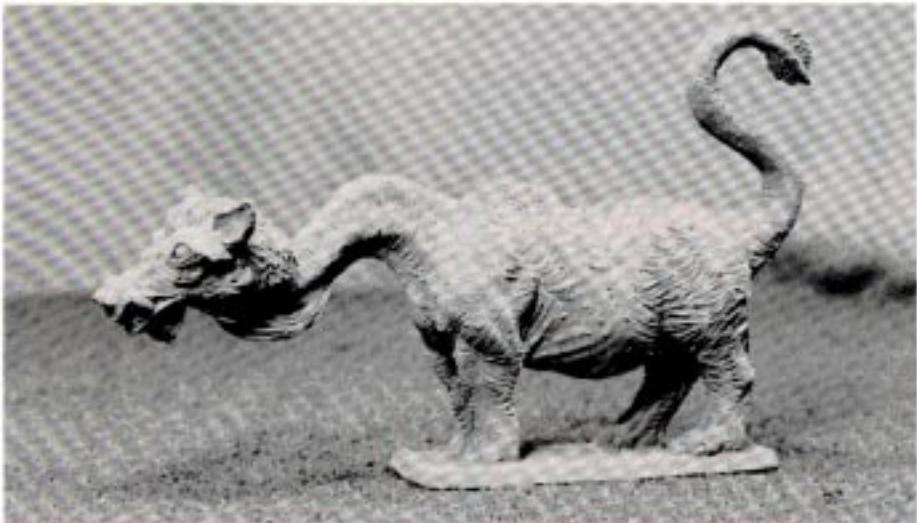
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Catoblepas (Ral Partha)



Villain (Grenadier Models)



Black Knight (Grenadier Models)

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### 8114—Villain

\*\*\*\* ½

Villains are one thing that no DM can have enough of, so when one is advertised, it deserves a special look. This villain is part of Julie Guthrie's second Fantasy Personalities line. It is a single figure scaled in 25 mm and made of lead. The base is oval and devoid of any detail except for a mold line at the rear. The figure stands well without having to file the base bottom. Some flash extended from the left hand, but it came off by itself. A light mold line is visible on the inside of the legs, but this is easily fixed with a light scrape of a knife.

The figure is dressed in simple boots that go up to the calf and then fold over to just above the ankle. His pants are loose except in the groin where he is apparently wearing extra protection. He wears an open shirt trimmed with studded leather that reaches to his shoulder blades. The chest detail is good. Facial detail is very good, with a sardonic grin and good (although shallow) detail on his neatly trimmed beard and moustache. His hair is slightly longer than shoulder length and is held by a thin piece of leather. His arms are bare except for a bracer on the left and a wrapped cloth on the right, the ends of which should not be cut off even though they drop past the edge of the arm. A simple sword completes the figure, and you will probably need to straighten it somewhat. This is highly recommended at \$1.50 each, as it can be used as either a good or evil character.

shoulders on a body that is about 82 mm long and 37 mm high.

There was no flash in this figure, and assembly was easy after trimming the tentacle posts slightly. There is no fur detail on the body, which is smooth and looks very much like a puma. Painting will be difficult, as you will have to paint on any fur color variations. The figure is stable despite the thin base. This is a recommended figure at \$5 each.

### 11-422—Catoblepas

\*\*\*\*

According to the AD&D 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium*, the catoblepas is a loathsome character that has a death ray as its normal attack. Ral Partha adds this terrible creature to its list of monsters. The miniature is almost 122 mm long, taking all the curves into account. Its face looks more like a donkey's and is warty and bumpy. The ears flare out, and the deep, toothy grin is supported by lower-jaw tusks. Big, bulging eyes finish the face. The neck curves into a flabby, bloated body covered with wrinkles. All four legs are very thick. The front hump, similar to a bison's, is covered with pebbled skin, while the rest of the back has spinal ridges, making the creature look as though it were starving. The tail is made up of thick muscular bands along its entire length; these are well detailed.

The metal of this figure has an almost crystalline look to it, which is different from other Ral Partha figures. This two-piece figure had thick, solid, hard-to-trim flash from the body all the way to the front paws. Both rear legs also have flash and major mold lines. My personal opinion is that the tail should be longer than it is.

As a swamp resident, this figure can't be beat, even though it will need work. The figure looks much like its illustration and is a large figure, even at the \$5 price tag.

### 8111—Black Knight

\*\*\*\*

Another figure in the Personality II series, the Black Knight is scaled in 25 mm and shares the same oval base common to this line. The base will need trimming and filing to remove the ridge line on the bottom. The upper surface is undetailed and has an easy-to-remove mold line between the feet.

The figure is 25 mm tall, even in its hunched-over position, which makes the knight over 6' tall. The figure has armored and flexible boots, plate armor that appears almost splintered, and knee plates with leering faces that will be obscured with too much paint. No flash or mold lines are on the legs. Upper body armor consists of many pieces in almost a jigsaw puzzle pattern that forms a whole. The armor in the back ends just below a belt, leaving the buttocks with little protection except for side plates. The upper body is protected by chain and elaborate shoulder plates with faces and horns on both sides. The flash on both horns must be carefully trimmed. A simple round shield with a well-done strap hangs off his left arm, and

a serrated-edged sword that is way too thick is held up in his right hand. The helmet looks like a lizard's face, complete with teeth, elongated eyes, and nasal ridges. There is also hair detail in the back. Care must be taken with all this detail as it is shallow and would be easy to obscure. This is recommended for use at \$1.50 each.

#### **Slog—Mysterious Stranger \*\*\*\***

Next in the Personality II series is the Mysterious Stranger. This figure scales out at 25 mm exactly. The base is slightly less than an oval; even though the figure stands, the base needs work.

The figure is wrapped in a set of flowing robes, capes, and a hoods that obscures all the detail that is usually the reason to buy a figure. Only a gloved right hand is actually visible, and the detail on the inside part of the wrist is lost due to a casting problem. The outside of the glove, a knife, and an unidentified object that looks like handcuffs are visible, as are the flattened bottom of the nose, eyes, and mouth (the latter seen through a cutout mask). Clothing details from blowing wind are consistent. This character would be good for use in a one-time adventure, as a character with a magical cloak or as a very good thief, but probably not as a regular player character. The figure costs \$1.50 each.

#### **8115—Female Archer \*\*\*\***

As with the other figures in the Personality II series, this one has an oval base that needs work on the bottom, both cutting and filing. Once again, the mold line crosses the top of the base, only this one also had flash, by the feet of the character, that needed to be trimmed.

This figure is 26 mm tall, so this is a tall woman in 25 mm scale. She has soft leather boots with fringes. These boots do have some light flash, so it is recommended that you work carefully. Her legs seem to be covered with hose, as there is no muscle detail except around the knees. She is wearing a shift covered by quilted armor. Her body is crisscrossed by belts that secure a simple sword, a quiver full of arrows with good feather and quiver detail, a large pouch closed with a clasp, and a small pouch in the back. She holds a well-done bow in her left hand (modeler's note: a human hair makes an excellent bowstring), and her right hand is pulled back as if she had just released a shot. There is flash under her outstretched left arm and sword, and this will need to be carefully removed. Her face is not pretty, with a mold line across the left side and slightly flawed features; her hair is shoulder length. Her left arm is protected from the bow by plates. With care, this figure will cure the "bikini fighter" blues. It's a good buy at \$1.50, even with the flash.

#### **1323—News Team \*\*\***

FASA's SHADOWRUN\* game continues to be popular. The News Team set for that

game is scaled in 25 mm and consists of three lead figures. The figures all have oval bases that must be filed level. No detail is visible on the tops of the bases, which are slightly rounded.

Figure #1 is a female reporter dressed in knee-high boots and a one-piece miniskirt/top with long sleeves and a pattern worked in. There is no flash, but a visible mold line runs under her outstretched left arm, and her left hand's fingers, which are supposed to be stretched out, are filled only to the knuckle joint. Her hairdo has good detail, but the detail is shallow. The face is very well done, as is the remote microphone she holds in her right hand, although the latter is a bit large. This is a plain figure with some pitting on the dress, but it is usable with other game systems.

Figure #2, wearing shoes and bell bottoms, is the group's cameraman. He wears a turtleneck sweater under a long-sleeved, multipocketed bush jacket. The shirt is rough textured, and there are no defects on either shirt or jacket. The curly hair and sharp, angular face will need care to maintain detail when painting. The man is looking into a portable camera with his left eye, and an earphone and mouthpiece are on the right side of his head. A cable leads from the camera to a backpack. Arm detail and some pocket detail on the rear are vague and blend with the other parts of the figure. The front is well done, but someone forgot about the back.

Figure #3 is the sound man. He wears what looks like a warm-up suit, with baggy pants, a closed jacket, and hard shoes. A sound recorder with a padded strap hangs from his left shoulder. There is a cartridge belt at his waist, and his right hand holds a pistol pointed into the air. Several pockets adorn his jacket. A mike and earphone are on the right side of his head. His round face and short hair will require care in painting. Of the three, this is the best sculpted figure.

These figures could be used for TSR's TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game or in any number



**Mysterious Stranger (Grenadier Models)**

of other modern or futuristic games. The figures are plain and detail is fair, but they are usable at \$3.95 per pack.

Next month, we begin our Christmas shopping list with lots of merchandise. If you have any questions, it is often easier to call me than to write. It is getting harder for me to send replies. My number is (708) 336-0790, and I can be reached at the following times:

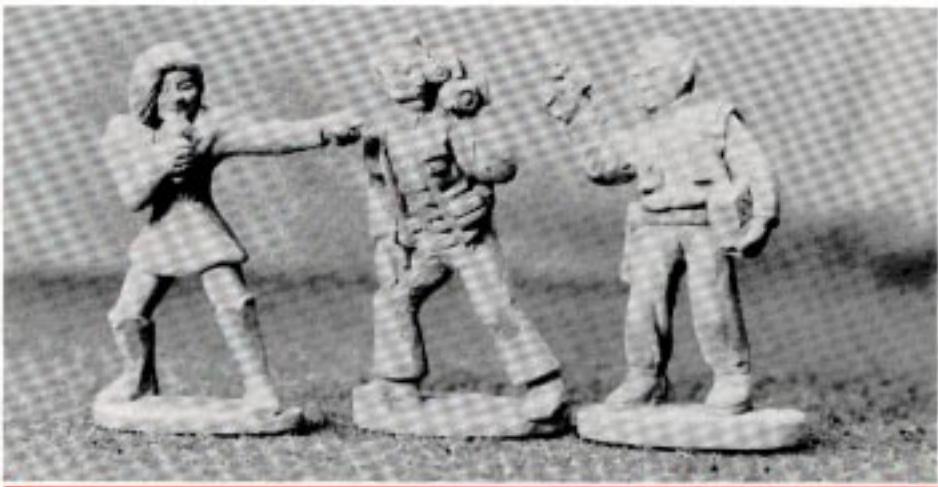
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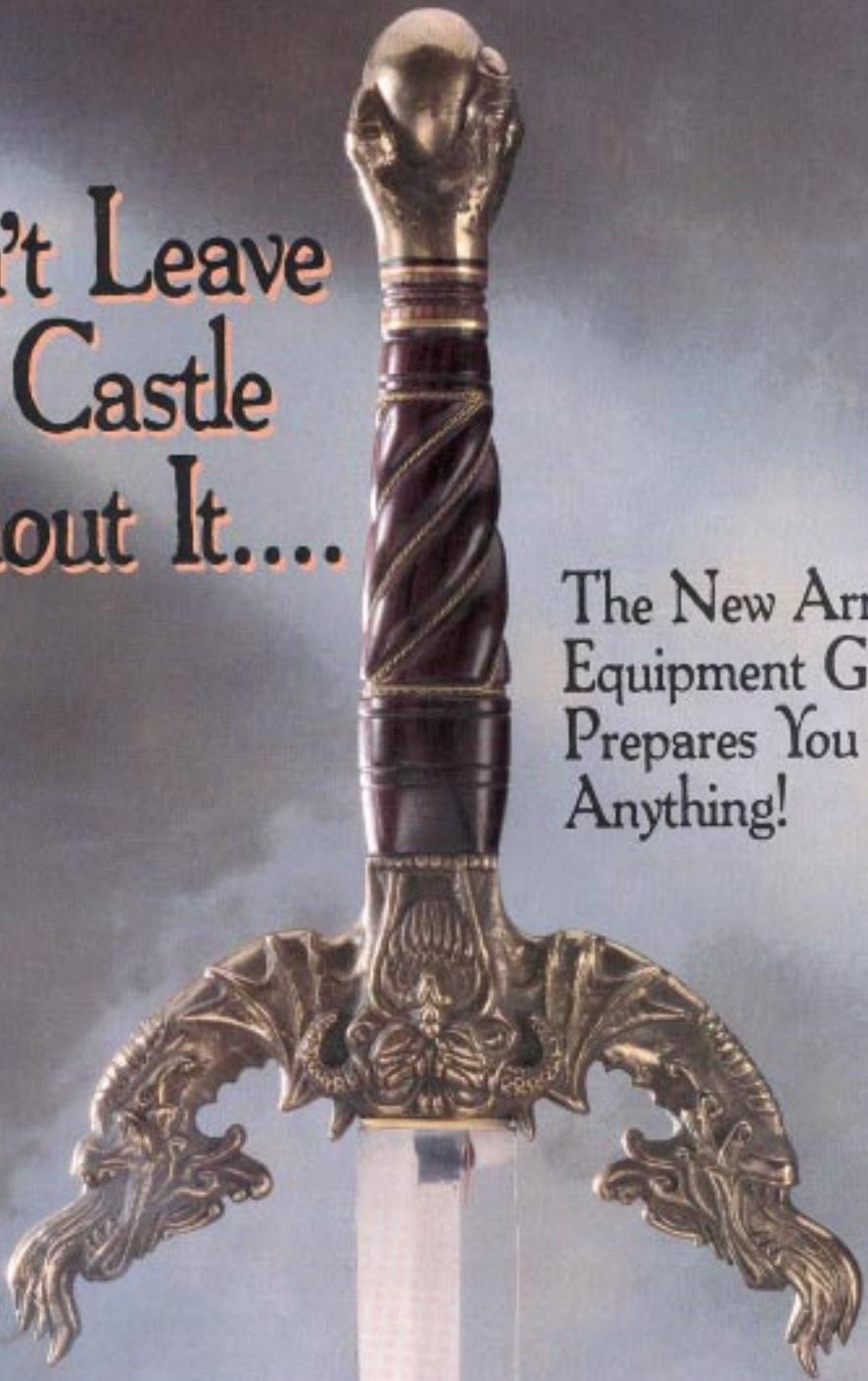


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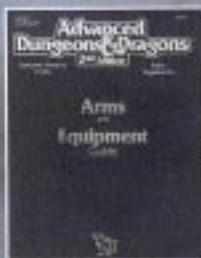
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